

THE
FUGITIVE
OF THE
FOREST.

A ROMANCE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY
MARIA LAVINIA SMITH.

VOL. II.

S
LONDON:
PRINTED AT THE
Minerva Press,
FOR WILLIAM LANE, LEADENHALL-STREET.
1801.



FUGITIVE
OF THE
F O R E S T



CHAP. 1.

Our lives discolour'd with our present woes,
May still grow bright, and smile with happier hours.

ADDISON.



ESTELLA continued three weeks at the castle of Stralzi, and daily found her situation more pleasing. She would indeed have been *happy*, had not the uncertainty she laboured under concerning Madame Veldentz, harrassed her

mind ; and had not the remembrance of Sigismund proved a perpetual source of sorrow !

She had in conformity to the Baroneſs's advice, written to the Abbeſs of St. Clare concerning Madame Veldentz, and had received an answer with ſtrong aſſurances that that lady had never written or made any enquiries concerning her at the Convent, and proteſting total ignorance of every thing that regarded her.

In reply to the letter written by Baroneſs Stralzi, the Abbeſs ſimply related the very little ſhe knew relative to Eſtella : which was, that Madame Veldentz had applied to her to receive a young perſon as boarder, of whom ſhe

had had the charge from infancy, and whom she was constrained for a time to quit; promising, at the same time, to send an annual sum for her maintenance. She then stated her surprise at finding the Cottage vacated, when she went to seek the young person committed to her care; and concluded with assigning the impropriety of Estella's conduct, in residing for above a fortnight in Count Isenburgh's Castle, to be the cause of her refusing her admittance to her Convent.

Happily for Estella, she had been perfectly sincere in the part of her narrative that related to what the Abbess had written; and as the Baroness was acquainted with the real cause of her remaining under the roof of Isenburgh,

the letter of the Abbess made no difference in her behaviour; or alteration in her sentiments towards her.

Whilst Estella was happy in the attentions and kind behaviour of the Marchioness and Baroness, the good humoured freedom of the Baron, (who soon lost the prejudice he had at first imbibed), and grew even accustomed to the reserve and austerity of the Marquis, the conduct of Palamede filled her with vexation. He seemed to court opportunities of finding her alone, and when he succeeded, generally commenced a few half-formed sentences, expressive of the earnest desire he had to serve her, and the interest with which she had inspired him; then, seemingly confused, abruptly break off his conversation, and remain silent!

He visibly observed her every action with the strictest scrutiny; his eyes, even in company, were perpetually fixed upon her countenance; and when any thing relative to her history was mentioned, he attended with a degree of avidity that deprived him of all circumspection.

The particularity of his conduct was so evident to Estella, that her apprehensions were excessive, and perpetual, lest it should be observed by any part of his family. For if, as she feared, love was the source of his behaviour, would not the Baron and Baroness, upon making the discovery, at once withdraw from her their favour and protection; and consequently, she would again be thrown upon the world, helpless and destitute!

These distressing reflections preyed upon her continually, and deprived her of the tranquillity she might otherwise, in some measure, have tasted. She behaved to Palamede with the most frigid coldness, never addressing him but when it was really unavoidable, and then with the utmost reserve.

He seemed aware of the cause of her conduct, but made not the smallest alteration in his own.

About this period the Castle of Stralzi was thrown into great distress. The Marchioness was seized with an alarming fever, and the most serious apprehensions were entertained for her life.

Estella's assiduities were unequalled: she never quitted the sick chamber, administered every medicine with her own hands, and for several successive nights refused every intreaty of retiring to rest, but remained constantly by the bedside of the invalid.

The Marchioness's gratitude was extreme; but whilst she thanked Estella for the boundless care and attention she bestowed, intreated her to be mindful of her own health; assuring her, that even if she should recover, her life would not be valuable, if in solicitude for her convalescence, her kind young friend should impair her own constitution.

At the expiration of a week, Estella enjoyed the very great happiness of hearing the Marchioness pronounced out of danger, and from that period her recovery was rapid.

Joy and festivity again visited the walls of Stralzi, and the grateful Marchioness daily bestowed fresh marks of affection towards Estella, and professed for her the sincerest friendship.

Nothing can be more gratifying to the heart than the assurance of having inspired a violent attachment; and the uncommon solicitude displayed by Estella during the illness of the Marchioness, evinced so much purity of re-

gard, that the prepossession, she had at first inspired, was rivetted into a permanent affection.





CHAP. II.

Why wilt thou stave thy sorrows to conceal,
Nor to my faithful ear thy cares reveal?

MOORE'S PASSO.



EVERY day seemed to increase the regard of the Marchioness towards Estella, whose heart returned a reciprocal friendship.

She most sincerely wished to be at liberty to relate *every* event of her life

to such an apparently warm friend; and the secrecy she was constrained to observe was an unceasing source of vexation.

The constant dread she entertained that some untoward accident might betray any part of her life that she had suppressed, and the continual grief she experienced for the death of Sigismund, gave an air of profound melancholy to her countenance, that added to the interest she inspired.

One morning, when alone in the Baroness's dressing room, she felt an irresistible temptation to endeavour to finish a little miniature she had attempted of Sigismund, soon after their separa-

tion; and with the resemblance of which she had been so much satisfied, that she had preserved it with great care, though, of course, unable to go on with it, whilst a prisoner at Ilenburgh's Castle.

The Baroness had been painting that morning; her colours and brushes remained on the table. Estella was confident she would not return for some time, (she having gone an airing with the Marchioness;) therefore taking out the little picture, and seating herself at the table, she commenced the undertaking.

She had been above an hour thus employed; and the resemblance to

Sigismund grew more perfect with every stroke of her brush. Quite absorbed in the employment and engrossed with the reflections that his image brought to her recollection, she heard not the opening of the door, nor was the least conscious that she was observed, till, happening to turn her head, she perceived Palamede earnestly gazing at the picture from behind her shoulder!

An involuntary exclamation of surprise escaped her! and the miniature fell to the ground.

Palamede instantly picked it up, and, refusing her earnest entreaties to restore it, seemed to gaze upon it with the most minute attention.

“ How does each day unfold your perfections, (he cried, without noticing her supplications to return it): This painting is really inimitable!”

“ ’Tis an attempt that does not deserve notice, (returned Estella); I formerly learned that kind of drawing, and merely wished to see if I had quite lost the talent.”

“ Where is the original?” (enquired Palamede).

“ The original is—I mean it is solely designed from fancy,” (replied Estella with great hesitation).

“ Indeed!” (retorted Palamede with a look of incredulity).

“ Yes, indeed, (continued Estella with increased confusion); and it is so very badly executed, that I am quite ashamed of my performance.”

“ And you would really persuade me this is merely a fancy painting! (exclaimed Palamede). Do you think me so strongly tinctured with the *family credulity*?”

Estella felt hurt: there was an allusion in the conclusion of his speech that mortified and confounded her, and she remained silent.

“ I do not wish to distress you, (added Palamede), but interrogate your own heart; have I not some cause to have suspicions? Deal candidly with me: I

am not only willing, but able to serve you; and you may rely upon my secrecy and discretion. I have long sought an opportunity of discoursing with you alone; but you have avoided me with such care, that the attempt till this morning has been fruitless. Do not look so coldly upon me; I may be deficient in *protestations* of regard, but I hope I cannot be accused of failing in the performance of friendship! Look upon me then in future as your *friend*; and as the first proof of your confidence, I require, that if the person whose features you have been delineating is dear to you, you now inform me of his name."

Estella listened to the declaration of Palamede with profound attention: and

for some minutes after he had done speaking, remained silent, and embarrassed: he again urged her, in stronger terms than before, to bestow upon him her confidence, and reveal the name of the original of the picture. But though there was an undescribable something in his manner, that rendered her half willing to have complied, upon the shadow of reflection, she found she neither could, nor ought; and after a little hesitation said,

“ Can you suppose, Lord Palamede, that if I unhappily had withheld any occurrence of my life from Baroness Stralzi, I could be induced to bestow my confidence upon her son? The mistrust you entertain is painful and humiliating to me. If I deserve it, I

am assuredly an object of commiseration, and 'tis ungenerous to persecute the unhappy. With respect to the picture : I can say no more than I have already uttered ; and you will now, I hope, return it to me ?”

“ I give it you, (answered Palamede, putting the picture into her hand,) and with it this caution :—Carefully conceal it from my mother, from the Marchioness ; nay, indeed, from every part of the family. The features are too well known for the pretext of its being a fancy picture to gain belief. And at the same time receive my assurance that I will never betray you !”

With these words Palamede hastily quitted the apartment, leaving Estella

overwhelmed with perplexity and surprise. From what he had uttered, it appeared he had been acquainted with the person of Sigismund; and she determined strictly to follow his injunction, with regard to concealing the miniature from all other eyes.

With respect to the hints he had given, of her having concealed some occurrences of her life, after bestowing much reflection on the subject, she concluded he merely spoke from conjecture, and with the hopes of ensnaring her into a confession, if the fact had been so.

From that day a visible alteration took place in the behaviour of Palamede; he no longer sought oppor-

tunities of conversing with her; no longer oppressed her with his regards; and Estella was very well satisfied, even to have incurred his displeasure, to be quit of the apprehensions his attentions had created.





CHAP. III.

Up springs the dance along the lighted dome,
Mix'd, and evolv'd, a thousand sprightly ways.
The glittering court effuses every pomp;
The circle deepens; beam'd from gaudy robes,
Tapers, and sparkling gems, and radiant eyes,
A soft effulgence o'er the palace waves.

THOMPSON

Foreboding tremors strike my heart,
Something sits heavy here, and presses down
My spirits with its weight.



PREPARATIONS for a masqued ball
engrossed the attention of most of
the inhabitants of Stralzi Castle.

The Baronefs, defigning it to be the moft fup̄erb and brilliant that had ever been given in that part of the country, fuperintended the decorative ornaments herfelf; and, as neither expence nor trouble were fpared, and her tafte was exquisitely fanciful, the long fuite of rooms appropriated for the fcene of gaiety, foon were fitted up in a ftyle of fplendid magnificence fcarcely to be equalled.

When the deftined evening arrived, the Baronefs was ftrenuous in her arguments, that Eftella fhould be prefent at a fpecies of amufement fo new to her.

Eftella, who had hitherto confined herfelf to her apartment, when any entertainments took place at the Caftle

(the very great affliction she experienced at the loss of Sigismund, depriving her of all relish for scenes of festivity, though always importuned by the Baronefs to join them), firmly resisting every sollicitation; and, though even urged by the Marchionefs, continued positive in her refusal.

The Baronefs seemed chagrined: "you are unaccountable, Estella, (she exclaimed peevishly); most young people at your age would rejoice at the opportunity of partaking of such an amusement!"

"I am very sensible of your goodness in desiring it, Madam, (returned Estella); but in my situation, I ought not to encroach upon your kindness!"

“ Silly scruples ! (replied the Baroness), have you no other objection ? ”

Estella paused and hesitated :

“ Would it be proper, Madam, after [the recent loss of my friend ? ”

“ To what friend do you allude, (enquired the Baroness) ; you never mentioned the death of a friend, when you related your history ! Indeed, what *friend* had you but Madam Veldentz ? ”

Estella's cheeks were dyed with the deepest crimson ; she again painfully experienced the torments of duplicity : and it was some minutes before she could reply—in faltering accents.

THE FOREST.

It was to her, Madam, I alluded."

"Then, indeed, my dear Estella, (cried the Marchioness,) I must join with the Baronets, in requesting you will no longer refuse. We must not allow you to nourish melancholy reflections!"

Oh, pray say no more on the subject, (interrupted the Baronets, with an air of pique;) Estella shall act just as suits her own inclinations."

Estella, with the deepest regret, perceived the Baronets was displeased; and, though contrary to her wishes and opinion, immediately acquiesced.

in the idea of partaking of the night's amusement; stipulating, however, that her dress might be such as would not attract observation, and declaring herself incapable of engaging in any character.

The hour, at length, arrived, and the apartments were soon crowded with a numerous assemblage of persons in every variety of character.

Estella, in a simple black domino, entered the grand saloon with the Marchioness, and hoped, by the plainness of her appearance, to pass unnoticed.

She was, however, mistaken; a mark, in the character of a magician,

seemed instantly attracted by her figure; and, leaving some masks habited as dæmons, with whom he had been in conversation, followed, and kept as close to her and the Marchioness, as the crowded room would permit.

The Marchioness suddenly complaining of heat, proposed, seeking a cooler apartment: Estella instantly assented, and they endeavoured to gain a passage through the crowded entrance; but, in the attempt, were separated. The Marchioness, unable to make an effort, being forced back to the ball-room, whilst Estella, (unknown to herself, assisted by the magician,) was hurried into one of

the rooms appropriated for refreshments.

Upon perceiving that she was divided from her friend, Estella experienced so much chagrin, that, for several minutes; she did not perceive that the magician was closely attending her. She sat down on a sofa closely adjoining the entrance to the ball-room, vainly hoping that the Marchioness would pass, and that she should be enabled to rejoin her.

The magician seating himself near her, endeavoured to engage her in conversation; the tone of his voice was familiar, though it was evident he sought to disguise it, yet his at-

tempts were fruitless. Anxious concerning the Marchioness, and mortified at having lost her protection for the evening, she could only return short and cold replies. He strongly urged her to dance; she refused in the most decided manner: he continued to intreat, when the appearance of two masks, in the characters of Mentor and Telemachus, seemed to attract their joint attention.

The masks paused as they approached the sofa on which Estella and the magician were seated; the latter rising, made a circular form with his wand: Mentor and Telemachus instantly departed.

The eyes of Estella involuntarily followed them.

The magician regarded her for some time in silence; at length he said,

" You appear interested concerning the characters that have just quitted this apartment !"

" Does not your *art* enable you to divine my thoughts?" (enquired Estella.) " Have you any that you wish to conceal? (returned the magician.) But why do I ask, acquainted as I am with your history !"

Estella made no reply; and the magician, after attending a few minutes in expectation that she would speak, continued in a lower tone :

“ Yes, Estella, every circumstance of your life is known to me !”

Estella; upon hearing her name called upon by one whom she supposed a stranger, startled; till recollecting, that the Marchioness might probably have called her by it in his hearing, when they were together in the ball-room. She endeavoured to throw off her embarrassment, and replied :

“ It is not surely surprising, that a *magician* should be acquainted with

the past! You are, no doubt, able to inform me of my future destiny?"

"Do you wish me to convince you?" (Enquired the magician.)

"No, (answered Estella, sighing;) I have already experienced such irremediable misfortunes, that my future prospects are for ever blasted!"

"But those misfortunes were the effect of your own imprudence!" (Returned the magician.)

"Perhaps so." (Replied Estella, mournfully.)

"The pressure of misfortune comes

with additional weight, when accompanied by the reflection of having acted with impropriety." (Rejoined the magician.)

" I had no friend to counsel or advise me." (Cried Estella.)

" You disdained the friend who was ready and willing to direct you, (answered the magician;) the *friend* you had even vowed to love, and to be guided by !"

Estella felt startled; an impulse for which she could not account, impelled her to continue the conversation.

" I shall have but an indifferent

opinion of your prescience, if you are so defective in your relation of past events!" (She returned.)

"Nay, (replied the magician,) you surely cannot deny but that you once possessed the love and tenderest affection of a faithful friend; of one who would have sacrificed life to serve you! yet, did you not scorn the counsel given you by this person? Did you not even act directly opposite to his directions?"

The embarrassment of Estella increased every instant.

"You are, indeed, mistaken; (she exclaimed, with much agitation;) I

never possessed the friend* you suppose."

" Ah, Estella! have you so soon forgot?" (Cried the magician.)

" Forgotten, what?" (Answered Estella, scarcely sensible of what she uttered.)

" *The chapel of St. Agnes!*" (Returned the magician, emphatically.)

" Merciful Providence!" (Shrieked Estella, and fell back senseless upon the sofa.)

She was instantly surrounded by the few persons who were in the

same apartment; and proper assistance being administered, speedily opened her eyes. In vain she looked eagerly for the magician; he had disappeared.

Though still faint and agitated by what had occurred, she resolved not to leave the spot till she had again beheld him. Whom he could be that was thus acquainted with the secret of her marriage, astonished and confounded her! Sigismund had obliged the priest and witness to their union, to take a solemn oath of secrecy; besides, it was beyond the limits of probability, that either of those persons should be at the ~~Baroness~~ Stralzi's ball!

Strange ideas bewildered her imagination; and she remained transfixed to the sofa upon which she had discoursed with the magician; insensible to every idea, but that of again seeing, and conversing with him.

Many of the persons whom her fainting had attracted to the spot, still surrounded her: she seemed perfectly insensible to the notice she had attracted; and to the speeches addressed to her, returned the most opposite replies.

In this situation she was found by the Baroness, who, having been informed that a lady had suddenly fainted away, had hastened to the apart-

ment to afford any assistance that might be required.'

Upon finding Estella to be the person, she enquired, with much tenderness, if her indisposition had been occasioned by the heat of the room, or from any other circumstance.

Estella, not daring to avow the truth, imputed it solely to the violent heat. The Baroness advised her to retire to her own apartment, if she was not perfectly recovered; but Estella, though really ill, felt so much anxiety to again see the magician, that, assuring the Baroness it had been a mere momentary indisposition that was entirely dissipated; she declined

the offer of retiring, and adding, that she wished eagerly to again enter the ball, and begged permission of the Baroness to accompany her when she returned thither.

The Baroness readily agreed; and, after some difficulty, they entered the grand saloon.

Estella now eagerly sought for the magician, but could nowhere discern him.

The Baroness engaged in talking to the different masks, had not leisure to bestow any attention upon her young companion, who, faint and dispirited, remained by her side, solely supported

by the hope of again beholding the author of her disquiet.

The mask, who had before attracted her attention as Mentor, now approached, and whispered something to the Baronefs, who instantly replied aloud,

“Certainly.” And then turning to Estella, exclaimed:

“Though you have hitherto declined dancing, I hope you will break your resolution in favour of my son, who now solicits to be your partner?”

Mentor immediately seized her

hand, and expressed his hopes that she would honour him; but the idea of dancing with Palamede was so distressing to the mind of Estella, that, withdrawing her hand, and turning to the Baroness, she begged so earnestly to be excused, that Mentor, finding all solicitation in vain, reluctantly retired in search of another partner.

At that juncture, much to the delight of Estella, the Marchioness appeared in company with a gentleman in a blue domino; and, after telling Estella she had been every where in search of her, proposed their visiting the Eastern tent, which, she added, in her opinion, exceeded all the

other apartments in taste and splendour.

Estella readily agreed; and, with the blue domino, (who proved to be Baron Stralzi,) they proceeded through the long gallery which led to the Eastern ball-room.

The gallery through which they passed, was illuminated with wax lights, placed in alabaster vases, which afforded a soft and agreeable light, something resembling moon-light; and the most fragrant and beautiful shrubs and exotics were arranged on each side, and gave the semblance of a grove to the narrow winding passage.

After being in the shaded light, the entrance of the tent presented a most dazzling *coup d'œil*!

Brilliantly illuminated, and magnificently decorated, the spectacle was attractive and elegant; and Estella, wholly unused to such scenes, could almost have supposed herself in a land of enchantment.

The hangings, (which were artfully disposed to give the entire effect of a tent) were of white satin, richly ornamented with silver, and supported by silver pillars, entwined with wreaths of myrtle, roses, and jessamine: the seats were also of white satin: and the

floor was painted with popular incidents from fabulous history.

The Marchioness, in the course of conversation, informed Estella, that she had been surprised with the appearance of her nephew, Lord Friburgh, that night.

“ I had flattered myself, (continued she,) that my son, Lord Meldorp, would have returned with him; but his cousin informs me, he is unexpectedly detained; but, however, that I may shortly expect him.”

Estella congratulated the Marchioness upon Lord Friburgh's arrival; and,

after some time, the Baron proposed repairing to the supper-rooms, which, by that time were thrown open, and, where the company were then hastening.

Estella at that moment perceived the magician advancing; and, eager to renew her conversation with him, ardently desired to have remained in the tent; but the Marchioness had consented to go, and she did not dare to oppose, and they once more gained the entrance of the gallery.

Upon entering the saloon, she again perceived the magician, who contrived to place himself nearly opposite to her at the table.

She eagerly hoped an opportunity would occur for his again speaking to her. The idea that he was Sigismund, every minute gaining strength in her mind.

He conversed with much gaiety to the different masks that were near him, and, frequently addressed the Marchioness, who replied to him with an air of freedom; and, once during supper, whispered to Estella.

“ I suspect my nephew fancies that his *mask*, and disguised voice, prevent my ascertaining him! I will humour the idea.”

This little speech of the Marchi-

one's occasioned much surprise to Estella! Could Sigismund be nephew to that lady! It was, she thought, impossible.

The object of her attention seized frequent opportunities of addressing her with the trifling observations general in mixed companies; though often mingling in his conversation some ambiguous phrases, that proved he was perfectly well acquainted with every circumstance of her history that she had essayed to conceal!

After some time, he presented her with a basket of sugar devices from across the table, and requested her particular attention to the mottos.

Estella broke several; the mottos proved trifling; but a small piece of twisted paper, directed to herself, at the bottom of the basket, attracted her attention; and carefully opening it, lest the contents should be visible, either to Baron Stralzi, or the Marchioness, she read the following lines, written with a pencil :

“ You must, undoubtedly, after the
“ discourse I addressed to you* this
“ evening, be convinced I am a *friend*
“ you ought not to avoid. Your ex-
“ treme agitation prevented me from
“ entering into the particulars I wished
“ to communicate. What I have to
“ unfold materially concerns you. Will
“ you honour me with half an hour’s

“ conversation tomorrow, at twelve,
“ in the pavilion, near the chestnut-
“ grove, in the park?”

The little billet was written in a hand so extremely similar to Sigismund's, that every line she perused increased the agitation of Estella.

The idea pressed upon her mind, that she had probably been deceived by Isenburgh, and that Sigismund still existed! That he might then be near to her; and that the mask who had displayed so much knowledge of her life, was the dear husband, whose supposed death she had lamented!

The magician was so much wrapped up in the large black robe that he wore, that it was impossible to form an idea of his figure; and his voice had before appeared to be familiar to her ear. The notion, (however chimerical,) that he was really Sigismund, became stronger every instant, and she was upon the point of yielding an acquiescence to the proposal of being in the pavilion at the appointed hour, when the recollection, that, if it should *not* prove to be Sigismund, of the risk and danger she might incur, again involved her in deliberation.

Estella continued several minutes

lost in perplexity, when the Marchioness roused her from her reverie, by announcing her wish to return to the ball-room, and she was forced to rise to attend her.

The magician leaning across the table, detained the Marchioness a few minutes, to whisper some communication: Estella and the Baron not perceiving it, continued to proceed down the room, which, the number of persons going different ways, rendered tedious and difficult.

Upon reaching the long gallery, the Baron observed they had lost the Marchioness, and, placing Estella upon a seat near the supper-room,

he begged she would remain there whilst he went back in search of her.

The Baron had scarce quitted her, when she perceived a person in a green domino, (who had distressed her infinitely during the course of the evening, by apparently watching her conduct,) approach.

He looked eagerly at her in passing, and had not proceeded many steps, before he turned back, and seemed returning to the bench on which she was seated; then suddenly appearing to recollect himself, hastily walked down the gallery.

Estella began to grow impatient

at the length of time that elapsed without the return of the Baron with the Marchioness, when a principal domestic of the Baron's approached her, and hastily announcing, that the Baroness was taken suddenly ill, and requested her immediate attendance in the library; intreated her to follow.

Estella did not hesitate a moment, but instantly rising, flew down the gallery with all possible celerity.

The room to which she was hastening, was on the ground floor, and opened into the park, though it had not been in use that night. Estella was surprised, upon entering it, to

find it empty; and, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, and coolness of the evening, the large glass doors from which the entrance was to the Park, quite open!

“The Baroness is not here, Rodrigo! (She exclaimed to the servant whom she had accompanied.) Do not close the door, I will return, and seek her in the saloon.”

“The Baroness has fainted, and is just carried here for the benefit of the air.” (Cried a voice from the outside of the glass doors.)

Estella eagerly flew to the spot; the green domino approaching, caught

her attention; a dreadful presentiment rushed upon her mind: she endeavoured to fly; her tottering limbs refused the office, and the mask seizing her in his arms, and stuffing a handkerchief into her mouth to prevent her cries from being heard, with the assistance of another person, forced her into a carriage that was in waiting at a little distance.





CHAP. IV.

I am no pilot, yet wert thou as far
As that vast shore, washed with the farthest sea;
I would adventure for such merchandize

SHAKESPEARE.



AS soon as the mask had placed Estella in the carriage, and seated himself by her side, the horses set off with a velocity scarce to be conceived.

The terrified and exhausted Estella, instantly concluded herself again in the power of Isenburgh; and the terrors she endured, nearly annihilated her weak frame.

Her companion preserved a gloomy silence till they had cleared the gates that enclosed the park of Stralzi; then, after removing the handkerchief from her mouth, the well-known accents of Isenburgh entreated her to banish her terrors; assured her, that he would never have employed violence, had he entertained the most distant idea that she would have returned to him, with entreaty; and concluded with assuring her, that her future treat-

ment should depend solely upon her own conduct.

Estella replied not a syllable to what Isenburgh had uttered; in fact, alive only to the misery of her situation, she had scarce understood a sentence.

Isenburgh, irritated by her silence, dropped the mildness he had endeavoured to assume, and broke into reproachful invectives.

After travelling some time, they stopped at a very small cottage on a retired common; and, lifting her from the carriage, and carrying her into a

parlour, Isenburgh gave a small parcel into her hand, and commanded her to take off the masquerade habit, and attire herself in the garments she would find in the bundle; at the same time cautioning her, not to think of making her escape, as he should, himself, stand sentinel at the outside of the room door till she was equipped.

A faint gleam of hope had stole through the bosom of Estella when she had entered the cottage, that she might find some one disposed to rescue her from the power of Isenburgh.

But the idea was transitory; not

a creature appeared that looked to be an inhabitant of the dwelling; and the light of morning had sufficiently dawned to allow her to see from the casement that looked towards the common, that there was, at least, a dozen men on horseback attending the carriage in which she had travelled.

Hopeless and exhausted, she sunk upon a chair; a shower of tears, in some measure, relieved her distressed heart, till she was roused by the reappearance of Isenburgh, who, entering the room in a travelling dress, chid her for detaining him so long.

Alarmed at his manner, Estella

promised, if he would leave her, to endeavour to put on the dress he required; and, upon that condition, he again departed.

Fearful of incensing him when so entirely in his power, Estella endeavoured, as well as her agitation would permit, to cloathe herself in the garments she found in the bundle.

She was scarce attired, when Isenburgh again appeared, and telling her, she was really the most extraordinary of all creatures; for that, notwithstanding her tears and passions, he had never seen her look prettier than at that moment! hurried her once more into the carriage.

After travelling about a league, Isenburgh, taking some provisions from one of the pockets of the carriage, strongly urged Estella to accept of some refreshments, but in vain.

“ Estella, (cried Isenburgh, after her positive rejection of the nourishment he offered,) you probably think, by refusing sustenance, to induce me to give up the completion of my scheme. Undeceive yourself; you are now safe in my possession, and no power whatever, nor no artifice of your own, shall induce me to relinquish you. In lieu of incensing me, it is your interest to oblige me; for, I repeat, that your fate depends almost entirely upon yourself. I am

willing to overlook all that has passed; then do not force me to extremities, by either disdain or obstinacy? We have already travelled near twelve hours; it will be impossible to reach home in less than eight and forty more; if you persist in this perverse refusal of food, you will, undoubtedly, occasion yourself a severe illness: you are already faint and low. Come, Estella, be prevailed upon."

The arguments of Isenburgh had some weight upon the mind of Estella. She acquiesced in her own heart, to the folly and risk of exasperating him; and, taking the resolution to temporize for the present,

accepted of some of the proffered refreshment.

Isenburgh seemed pleased with her acquiescence, and endeavoured to engage her in conversation, but the latter attempt was quite ineffectual !

“ Have you no curiosity to hear how I discovered your retreat, Estella? (he enquired.) I assure you I have been at no little trouble ! Oh, what a passion I was in when I heard of your flight ! That idiot, Ulrique, concealed it from me till the evening after your departure, (pretending you was too ill to rise from your bed,) being, as she afterwards said, afraid of

the effects of my anger. Owing to that piece of folly, you gained an advantage not to be retrieved by me. Had I pursued you instantly, you could never have eluded the diligent search I made."

Ifenburgh paused at these words, and seemed to expect a reply; but Estella remaining silent, he continued,

"In my first transports of anger, I turned off every servant in my house, (excepting poor old Catherine, who, having lived near thirty years in the family, I could not prevail upon myself to dismiss.) I then hurried to Mansfeldt, thinking you might have fled thither; but the family were ab-

sent, nor could I learn any tidings of you: at length, my good genius pointed out to me to enquire at the convent of St. Clare; and, from the Abbess learned, that you was then under the protection of Baroness Stralzi, at Pilsen. Astonished at your having secured such respectable protection, and to find you had actually introduced yourself into Sigismund's family, I judged it necessary to proceed with caution; and, hastening to Pilsen, I remained incog. attentively observing the motions of the family. When I heard of the projected masquerade, I instantly formed the resolution of carrying you off by stratagem on that night; and, by bribing highly three of Baron Stralzi's servants, effected my scheme,

as you know. Had I not succeeded, I designed to have waited on Marquis Rosenhaim, and informed him, you was the adventures that had been endeavouring to seduce his son into a marriage; and, by that method, have occasioned your dismissal from the castle!"

Estella sighed; the words that Isenburgh had spoken, concerning her having introduced herself into the family of Sigismund, dwelled upon her mind, and excited her strongest curiosity!

She called to recollection the conversation of Palamede respecting the miniature of Sigismund, and was more

than ever convinced he was acquainted with him.

But it was singular, that, during the seven weeks she had been an inmate in the castle, neither his name, nor that of his family, should never have been mentioned.

Once, she remembered Marchioness Rosenhaim speaking familiarly of Mansfeldt; and, from her conversation, judging they had a mansion in the vicinity, had been tempted to enquire concerning Baron Mansfeldt's family; and, timidity alone, had prevented her so doing.

Isenburgh roused Estella from the

train of thoughts into which the mention of Sigismund's family had thrown her, by exclaiming:

“ Tell me, sincerely, Estella ; have you and Sigismund come to an explanation ? ”

Estella could no longer remain silent.

“ Sigismund ! (she repeated in an accent of surprise.) Did you not tell me, Count Isenburgh, that he was no more ? ”

“ And have you not yet discovered, (replied Isenburgh, carelessly,) that I told you a falsity ? In love,

as in war, all stratagem is authorized!"

Estella made no reply, and their journey was continued without interruption. Whenever they approached a town or village, Isenburgh carefully drew up the blinds of the carriage, so that every hope Estella might have cherished of gaining assistance, was entirely baffled.

It was midnight when they arrived at the castle near Mindleheim.

The suffering and wearied Estella was lifted from the carriage, half dead with fatigue and distress.

Upon perceiving herself again in the dwelling from which she had found it such a difficult matter to escape, and from which she had lost all hope of again flying, a deadly sickness came over her heart, and, almost fainting, she caught by the staircase for support, and, in silence, offered up an humble prayer to the Power that could alone extricate her from the evils with which she was threatened.

Ifenburgh, perceiving her situation, appeared concerned.

I am distressed, (he cried,) that that there is not proper female at-

tendants to receive you! I will, to-morrow, endeavour to procure them: in the mean while, will you accept of old Catherine's attendance, and retire to your apartment? I will not solicit your company at supper to night; you are fatigued, and, doubtless, wish to be alone!"

Estella gratefully thanked Isenburgh for the permission to retire; but the man who had opened the door to them, said,

" I will call Catherine; but I am afraid she is not well enough to wait on Miss; she has been very bad indeed, for this last fortnight!"

“ Let her be called this moment!”
(Exclaimed Isenburgh.)

“ Oh, if she is ill, pray do not disturb her? (cried Estella;) I want no attendance;” and, taking a light from the person nearest to her, ascended the stair-case, and, with a heavy heart, repaired to her former apartment.





CHAP. V.

'Tis but a superficial art
To heal the skin, and make the surface whole,
When an unsearchable and mortal sting,
Has pierced the nobler part.



AFTER fastening the door of the chamber, Estella, who, though worn out with fatigue, yet felt no disposition to sleep, threw herself into an arm chair, and gave free indulgence to the affliction of her heart.

That Sigismund lived she now firmly believed; • and that, in the character of the magician, he had discoursed with her the evening of the masquerade.

Distracted with the idea that he would probably suppose she had willingly abandoned Baroness Stralzi's protection, she gave way to the most frantic despair, till several raps at the door excited her alarm and attention.

“ Who's there?” (She enquired with much trepidation.)

“ It is Catherine, Miss, with your supper; and who is come to prepare

your bed." (Answered a female voice from without.)

Estella opened the door, and, an old, infirm woman appeared, whose countenance depicted so visibly the marks of asperity and ill humour, that Estella felt a sentiment of dislike instantly arise in her breast.

But, when the poor creature, after placing upon the table the different articles she had brought, seemed nearly exhausted with illness and fatigue, the natural compassion Estella possessed, conquered every prejudice, and, looking at the old woman with tenderness, she said,

“ I am concerned you have been occasioned this fatigue upon my account ! Pray sit down, and when you are rested, retire to your own room. I cannot think of accepting the aid of one who seems to require attendance in lieu of bestowing it ! ”

“ Thank ye, Miss, (returned the old woman, seating herself in the chair Estella offered ;) I am, to be sure, very ill : sinner, that I am, I seem now to suffer for my iniquities ! But, had I known my master would have returned to-night, to be sure I would have had things in better order. Ah, Miss ! I am sorry from my heart he has found you ! and yet I am glad to see you here. ”

“ Glad to see me! (repeated Estella, with surprise,) Why should you be glad to see me? I do not recollect even to have seen you when I was last confined in this place!”

“ True, Miss, (answered Catherine,) but I have many things to say to you! Did not you, when you was last here, lose a golden chain, with a heart upon, which was engraved in a cypher, A. E. M.?”

“ Yes, indeed, I was so unfortunate, (cried Estella;) tell me, my good woman, did you find it?”

“ Why— yes.” (Replied Catherine, with some hesitation.)

“ Oh! that I had any reward to offer you! (returned Estella,) but, alas! I have nothing to give, but thanks! I am poor and destitute! But say when can you restore it to me? Can you give it to me to-night?”

“ No, (answered Catherine;) I have it not about me. You shall, however, have it the first opportunity. And now, Miss, pray tell me who gave it to you?”

“ A very dear friend!” (Replied Estella, rather surprised at the interrogation.)

“ Were the initials hers?” (Again enquired Catherine.

“ No, (answered Estella ;) they belonged to my parents.”

Catherine made no reply ; she seemed overwhelmed with sickness. An asthmatic cough, for some minutes, deprived her of respiration.

Estella offered her all the assistance in her power, and addressed her with a degree of softness and compassion that seemed highly gratifying to the poor sufferer, who, as soon as she was sufficiently recovered to be able to speak, said,

“ You appear a kind-hearted good young lady. I am heartily sorry I cannot assist you in *your* troubles: what

I can, I will do, you may depend upon it: but have you no friends to take your part? Where is your father and mother? Are they not living?"

" I never knew the comforts of parental care, (replied Estella, with tears;) and the only friend I ever possessed, is fled from me for ever!"

" Well, do not despair, (rejoined Catherine;) hope for the best; you may yet know many happy days! *In the mean while, pray do not exasperate my master; by appearing a little reconciled to his conduct, you may, at any rate, gain time; and who can say what shall happen?"

Catherine then repeated her offers of service with respect to waiting upon Estella, who, in consideration of her age and infirmities, declined to accept them; and, finding her attendance not required, she withdrew.





CHAP. VI.

————— Oh, bid me leap
From off the battlements of yonder tower ;
Or chain me to some steepy mountain's top,
Where roaring bears and savage lions roam ;
Or, shut me nightly in a charnel house,
O'er-covered quite with dead mens' rattling bones,
With recky shanks, and yellow chaplefs skulls ;
Or, bid me go into a new made grave,
And hide me with a dead man in his shroud ;
(Things, that to hear them named, have made me tremble)
And I will do it without fear or doubt,
To live, an unstained wife, to my sweet love.



THE following morning, Estella received a message from Isenburgh, re-

questing she would favour him with her company at breakfast.

Happy to seize any pretext for avoiding him, she pleaded the fatigue of her journey, and begged to remain in her apartment.

Isenburgh, with a degree of complaisance that did violence to his feelings, acquiesced; but shortly afterwards sent up another message to say, she *must* meet him at dinner.

The apprehension of incensing him determined Estella to comply; and, when the hour arrived, she repaired to the saloon, trembling with fear and anxiety.

Ifenburgh received her with apparent marks of pleasure and satisfaction; and endeavoured, by entertaining her with lively conversation, to banish the evident embarrassment under which she laboured.

Directly, upon the servants removing the dinner, Estella rose, and moved towards the door.

“ Stop, Estella, (cried Ifenburgh, rising to prevent her,) before you retire, I must explain my intentions.”

Estella seemed irresolute how to act; but Ifenburgh, seizing her hand, gently led her back to her seat.

“ I am distressed, Estella, (he continued,) to perceive the fears you seem to entertain. Banish every unpleasant apprehension; it is true you have reason to suppose me irritated by your cruel desertion of my protection, and consequent rejection of my honourable proposals; and I will acknowledge that I *was* highly displeased! but I am not vindictive; my anger soon evaporates; as a proof, I again offer you my hand! An *offer*, which, believe me, few persons in my situation, would have the generosity to make: but, observe, Estella, I will not be trifled with; every thing is in readiness for our union taking place this evening; prepare yourself to meet me, therefore, at

the altar: if you have the folly to refuse, take the consequences, and blame only yourself!"

Estella endeavoured to reply, but tears choked her voice, and all utterance was denied her.

Ifenburgh perceived her distress, and again addressed her:

" I scarce know how to interpret your present agitation. I am willing to believe it does *not* proceed from any repugnance to what I have just proposed. Estella, my conduct must have proved to you that I am determined to make you mine: do not, by perverseness, oblige me to act in

a manner I wish to avoid! For the present, retire to your chamber; consult your own reason, and let that determine you. At nine o'clock I shall expect you will, with cheerfulness, allow me to conduct you to the chapel."

The words of Isenburgh, were like daggers to the heart of Estella; who, however, gladly availed herself of the permission to retire; and, hastening to her chamber, gave vent to the agony of her mind.

She shuddered at the consequence of informing Isenburgh of her marriage; yet it was a confession she found it would be absolutely necessary to reveal.

After much deliberation she resolved to defer it till she was before the priest, hoping his presence might be some check to the violence of Isenburgh.

The recollection of her chain and heart then occurred; and desirous of seeing Catherine, (whom she was rather surprised had not visited her in the course of the day,) she rang the bell.

Two strange young women instantly appeared, and with many curties, informed her, they had been hired by Count Isenburgh to attend her, and begged to know her commands.

Estella informing them that she wished to speak to Catherine, one of them instantly departed, but presently returned, with intelligence, that the poor creature was too ill to wait upon her.

“ She tells me, (continued the young woman who was named Charlotte,) that she was coming to your apartment, Madam, this morning, but was seized with a fit upon the stairs, in which state some of our fellow-servants found her, and carried her to her bed-room.”

“ I wished to have seen her concerning a chain I have lost, and

which, she informed me, she had found, (answered Estella.) Will you be so good as to enquire if she can now send it to me?"

Charlotte again visited the chamber of Catherine, but shortly returned with a message full of respect to Estella; but, at the same time saying, it was not in her power then to return the chain.

Estella sighed! but, at that moment, a great clock of the castle striking seven, more distressing images assailed her mind! She shuddered with apprehension: her attendants observing her emotion, enquired if she was ill? She replied in the nega-

tive; and, feeling their presence an insupportable constraint, added, that she had then no occasion for their services, and would ring when she required them.

“ We shall have the honour to attend you to the chapel, my Lady, I hope! (cried Charlotte, as with the other attendant she was leaving the room.) Shall we return in half an hour? The priest is already arrived.”

A sudden idea struck upon Estella's mind, that, by discoursing with the priest, without witnesses, and avowing the marriage she had already formed, she might secure a friend that might assist her.

She therefore desired her women not to leave her; and enquired, if they could inform her where the priest then was?

Charlotte immediately offered to go and enquire.

“ Do so, (returned Estella,) but let your enquiries seem to proceed alone from yourself. Upon no account inform Count Ifenburgh that I desired them !”

Charlotte readily promised, and saying she would be expeditious, departed.

She was, however, some time

gone; but, upon her return, informed Estella, that the priest was alone in a small room adjoining the chapel, and offered to conduct her there if she had any thing to say to him.

Estella, (who imagined herself sufficiently well acquainted with the castle to discover the way to the chapel,) declined the offer; and, saying she had only enquired from motives of curiosity, dismissed both her attendants.

They were no sooner departed, than she determined to seek the priest; and, taking a lamp that burned upon the table, softly opened the door of her chamber, and, with light steps

descended the stair-case, and hastily crossed the gallery that led the way to the chapel.





CHAP. VII.

————— Soft her accents fell,
Like voices of departed friends heard in our dream,
Or music in the air, when the night spirits
Warble their magic minstrelsy.



ESTELLA's heart throbbed violently
as she descended the winding stair-
case that she expected would bring

ret to the door that opened into the court of the chapel!

Upon reaching it, her hands trembled with the agitation she underwent, to such a violent degree, that she was obliged to pause some minutes, before she had strength sufficient to remove the fastening.

The night was clear and beautiful; the moon shone with uncommon brightness; every object seemed discernable; and, perceiving a door to her right hand, she conjectured it to belong to the room of which Charlotte had spoken; and, putting her hand upon the lock, it instantly gave way.

She entered, and at the same instant, the door closed with violence. The noise startled her; the more so, as the night was mild and serene, and the wind did not appear to have sufficient power to have been the occasion.

After remaining a few minutes irresolute, whether to proceed or to return, Estella; holding up her lamp, endeavoured to survey the room.

It appeared small and confined: the window-shutters were close shut, so that the moon had no power to emit her light.

Every thing was silent; and she

had determined to return to her apartment, and resign herself to the task of avowing her marriage in Isenburgh's presence, when she perceived another door at the further end of the apartment.

Hope again reanimated her; and she hastily reached the door, which, after having passed, she found had conducted her into a small passage.

A light appeared at some distance, and the air she breathed was cold and damp.

The lamp she carried afforded but an indifferent light, and frequently occasioned shadows as she passed,

which, though she was not very timid, yet appalled her imagination.

She, however, proceeded; but, upon gaining the spot from whence the light appeared, found herself in the chapel, which seemed perfectly empty; and that the light that had attracted her, proceeded from the moon shining through the long Gothic windows.

Disappointed and chagrined, she turned, with the intention of getting back to her apartment as expeditiously as possible, when a sound, like footsteps arrested her motion, and, placing herself behind a large pillar to which she happened to be near, and con-

cealing her lamp as well as she was able, remained a few minutes in mute attention, scarce allowing herself to breathe.

She gazed fearfully around; the light of the moon allowed her to distinguish some objects with facility; but, upon others, cast a shade that added to the solemnity of the scene; and the air of gloomy grandeur that pervaded the whole, inspired her with dread and awe; yet every thing appeared still and quiet.

She ventured from her place of concealment, and determined to return the way she had entered.

Upon looking towards the door, she thought she discovered a figure at some distance.

Alarmed, she turned hastily down the aisle, and presently found herself at the foot of the altar.

She again ventured to look towards the spot from whence she thought she had beheld the figure, but nothing was to be seen; and she flattered herself it had been a phantom, created by her own imagination.

Her courage returned: the sight of the altar called to her recollection the interesting moment of her union

with Sigismund; and, falling upon her knees, she first silently ejaculated a fervent prayer for deliverance from the power of Isenburgh, and then renewed the solemn vows she had plighted, of love and fidelity to the beloved possessor of her affections.

Upon rising from her knees, the heart of Estella sunk with terror at hearing a soft noise from behind, that resembled half-suppressed breathing.

She remained some moments motionless with fear, which increased to horror, upon feeling herself encircled in an embrace.

A piercing shriek escaped her; she

endeavoured to fly, but found herself closely with-held.

She struggled, but had not the resolution to look round. The person who held her uttered some accents, which her terror prevented her from distinguishing.

At length, endeavouring to conquer her terrors, she ventured to turn her head, and beheld herself clasped in the arms of Isenburgh!

Fear, for a few minutes, lent her additional strength; she tore herself from his embrace, and flew with rapidity down the aisle.

Isenburgh, catching up the lamp,

(she had left upon the steps nearest to the spot where she had been kneeling,) quickly pursued her: she heard his footsteps, and terror added celerity to her flight. The door through which she had passed into the chapel, continued open: she rushed through it to the long passage, and at last reached the room in which she had hoped to have found the priest.

In vain she sought to discover the door that opened into the court; every object was obscured in the total darkness that prevailed.

Breathless and exhausted, she leaned against the wainscot for support, and heard the approach of Isenburgh

with sensations of horror and despair that are undescribable.

Ifenburgh almost immediately entered the apartment, and, closing the door, instantly discerned the terrified, and, nearly-fainting Estella.

Placing the lamp upon the table, he approached her, and, with a smile, exclaimed :

“ Why, my dear, unaccountable Estella! Tell me, I conjure you, what occasions this sudden extraordinary alarm? We parted, as I thought, perfectly good friends after dinner; and I since learned you had, of your own free will, repaired to the chapel.

Pleased with the intelligence, I hastily followed you; but, at the moment when delighted with your compliance, I am going to express my gratitude, you scream as if terror struck, and fly, as if you had encountered a spectre! But compose your spirits my sweet girl; if I alarmed you by my sudden appearance, believe me, I am heartily sorry."

Estella could not reply. Isenburgh, drawing a chair near to the table on which he had placed the lamp, obliged her to sit down; and, by the tenderest expressions, endeavoured to restore her to composure.

The chapel clock struck *nine*: Es-

tella trembled, but Isenburgh seeming not to perceive her emotion, took her hand, saying,

“ Come, dearest Estella, let me lead you back to the altar.”

Estella withdrew her hand, and shrunk from him; yet emboldened by the softness which she thought she perceived in his manner, said, in a tremulous tone :

“ Count Isenburgh, am I really to suppose you love me ?”

“ *Suppose I love you!* (Returned Isenburgh.) Estella, you are dearer to me than existence! What would

I not perform to insure your happiness!
There is no sacrifice, however difficult, but what I would gladly make to receive only one approving smile!"

"Then, indeed, it is quite in your power to command my esteem and gratitude for ever!" (Answered Estella.)

"Oh, name but the conditions!"
(Cried Isenburgh, eagerly.)

"Pray hear me with patience, (replied Estella.) Obstacles that cannot be removed, impede our union, and ——"

"No, no! (Interrupted Isenburgh,)

on that subject I will not hear a syllable! You already know my final determination!

"Oh, say not so! (Exclaimed Estella.) You are too generous to oppress the unfortunate! Recollect the promises of protection you encouraged me with upon our first meeting! I most gratefully remember the kind relief you then afforded me; but for your generosity, to what evils might I not have fallen a victim? Do not let it be said, you saved me from the calamities that I might have suffered from others, to be yourself the inflictor of my miseries!"

"Is there so much cruelty in

asking you to accept my hand and fortune?" (Demanded Isenburgh haughtily.)

" Yes; (answered Estella,) when I repeat, that it is utterly impossible for me to accept them!"

" Take care, Estella; (replied Isenburgh,) I am now calm; but be cautious how you excite my resentment. Remember, you are solely in my power!"

" Oh, Count Isenburgh! (Cried Estella.) You have now named my greatest security! I am in your power; and have I not therefore a claim upon your generosity? What man of honour

would take advantage of the helpless state of the friendless and unhappy?"

" I insist upon being informed of the reasons, that you say, render our marriage impossible. (Exclaimed Isenburgh, who had seemed for some minutes lost in conjecture.) *If* any do exist, it is proper I should be made acquainted with them."

" I cannot tell you whilst you look so sternly!" (Answered Estella, agitated violently.)

" No trifling, Estella! (Returned Isenburgh.) *I will* be informed!"

" Then hear me with calmness,

(exclaimed the intimidated Estella :) but the vows you demand, are already given to another !”

“ ’Tis false ! (Cried Isenburgh, vehemently.) You assert an impossibility ! When ? Where could this pretended union take place ? No ; it is a palpable invention, too ridiculous to gain belief ; nor does it in the least shake my resolution !”

“ And yet, (cried Estella, shedding a torrent of tears,) I have uttered nothing but the truth.”

“ Name, then, the person to whom these vows were given.” (Returned Isenburgh, with encreasing passion.)

" I dare not, (said Estella;) but, as I hope for your compassion and forgiveness, indeed, I am already married!"

" Then it is Sigismund by whom I am supplanted! (Rejoined the enraged Isenburgh.) But do you imagine this confession will avail you? On the contrary, it has added a stimulus to my intentions! And the gratification of humbling you to become my mistress, will be even heightened by the reflection, that I am, at the same time, heaping shame and disgrace upon my detested rival!"

" Oh, mercy! mercy!" (Shrieked the half-frantic Estella.)

At the same instant, from the extremity of the room nearest to the chapel, appeared the form of a pale, but beautiful female, in loose flowing drapery, which drooped in folds, and half shaded her countenance.

“ Ifenburgh ! (Cried the shade.)
My son ! Desist ! Estella is thy
sister !”

“ What is it I behold ? (Ex-
claimed the amazed Ifenburgh.) This
is some deception !”

With these words he sprung to-
wards the spot where he beheld the
appearance ; but his foot struck against
the table ; he fell with it to the ground,

with violence; the lamp was extinguished, and every object was lost in the darkness that succeeded.





CHAP. VIII.

There is a trembling expectation in me,
That, by some secret impulse, draws me on
To the great revelation of my fate'

The time is lab'ring, wondrous things and new
Press to the birth, prepare yourself to meet them.



ESTELLA, who had sunk upon the floor in breathless terror, upon the appearance of what she concluded a

spectre, remained some time in total insensibility.

Upon opening her eyes, she was tempted first to believe, from the quiet that prevailed, and the entire darkness, that she had been only harassed with a tormenting dream ; but a few minutes reflection convinced her, that every thing that had seemed to occur, was perfectly real.

The words of the spectre still vibrated upon her ear, and bewildered her in doubt and amazement.

She blessed the merciful interposition that had miraculously saved her from the violence with which she had

been threatened; and, as her^e courage returned, even wished for the re-appearance of the shade, to elucidate the mysterious words she had uttered!

Astonished at the stillness that continued, and surprised at what could have befallen Isenburgh, she rose from the ground and endeavoured to gain the part of the room where the windows were situated.

After some time she discovered one, and having with difficulty opened the shutters, the moon still shining, enabled her to observe the state of the apartment.

Isenburgh lay extended upon the

floor close to the table over which he had fallen ; and seemed to have received a severe wound on his forehead with one of the sharp corners.

She immediately approached him ; he was stunned by the blow he had received, and the blood ran fast from the wound !

“ Oh ! (thought Estella) if he is indeed my brother, ought I to leave him in this state ? ”

And at the same instant tearing a part of her gown, she endeavoured to bind up the wound.

Isenburgh half opened his eyes,

and perceiving how she was employed, feebly articulated his thanks.

“ I will endeavour to call assistance,” (cried Estella, after having bound up his forehead as well as she was able).

“ No, do not, I conjure you, Estella, (exclaimed Isenburgh) in a few minutes I think I shall be able to quit this spot, leave me I beg, I want no further aid.”

Estella obeyed, and meeting no opposition, regained her own chamber, where she had not been many minutes before her attendant, Charlotte, appeared.

"Oh! dear Madam (cried she upon entering) I have been seeking you every where! I come from poor Catherine, who, I am really afraid, is dying; and she begs so earnestly to see you, that I hope you will not deny her request! To be sure it is a mournful spectacle, but the poor creature's pleadings would melt a heart of stone!"

"Conduct me to her immediately,"
(replied Estella).

"And, following Charlotte, was soon introduced to the chamber of Catherine.

The poor creature upon beholding

Estella, gave an exclamation of transport! then looking towards Charlotte, she softly whispered:

“ But, what I have to unfold must be to yourself alone.”

“ Leave us, Charlotte,” (said Estella).

The woman withdrew; and Catherine, looking earnestly at Estella, exclaimed,

“ Oh! tell me, have you been able to avoid the projected marriage?”

“ Yes, (replied Estella) I am still free!”

“ Oh! merciful Providence! I thank Thee! (cried Catherine energetically, and with uplifted hands); Oh! Miss Estella, I have much to unfold, but I am so weak, I must make my narration as short as possible, first, promise me your forgiveness.”

“ You surely cannot have injured me! (returned Estella), yet if you think you have, accept my pardon.”

“ Alas! (rejoined the old woman) your innocent heart can little imagine the guilt and wickedness of the wretch now before you; how you will execrate me when you know all! but I am penitent! and an ample confession

appears to me the only way of attempting to extenuate my guilt!"

"Oh! how you torture me with suspense, (exclaimed Estella), for pity's sake be brief."

"Have you been in the chapel to night? (enquired Catherine) or in any of the places adjoining?"

"*I have.*" (answered Estella with emotion).

"Tell me then, dearest Lady, (repeated Catherine) did you not see a female figure."

"Ah!" (cried Estella, fearfully)

by what miracle could you discover it?"

" Oh, Miss Estella, (resumed the old woman,) then you have beheld your mother?"

" What! (exclaimed Estella, wildly,) beheld my mother! And does she live?"

" Yes, (sobbed out Catherine;) she lives, indeed!"

" Gracious heaven! (cried Estella, falling upon her knees.) I thank Thee! And may you, (continued she, turning to Catherine,) for this *one* confession, receive forgiveness for all

your offences, be they ever so numerous! But direct me how to find her. Let me fly to her! Is she imprisoned? Surely Ikenburgh cannot know——”

“ Oh, no, indeed, (answered Catherine,) he is perfectly ignorant of every circumstance: but take these keys, Miss. Go to the first door on your right hand that opens from the paved court into the chapel. When in the room that it will lead you to, (and in which I imagine you have already been this night,) you will observe a large picture of the late Count hanging nearly opposite the door: carefully seek for a button that is behind the canvas; press it

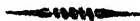
hard with your fingers, the pannel and picture will slide back, and you will then perceive a door of grated iron; unlock it, and descend the stairs to which it will conduct you, and you will then enter the abode of your unfortunate mother."

Estrella eagerly took the keys with which Catherine presented her; and, not even reflecting upon the terrors she had so lately experienced there, directed her trembling steps towards the chapel.



CHAP. IX.

CLERIC auteur de mes jours, par quel
Miracle, par quel prodige m'etes
Vous rendu ?



ESTELLA, having strictly observed the instructions of Catherine, soon discovered the secret spring in the wainscot; and, pressing it hard with her

thumb, it instantly opened, and discovered the grated door.

A variety of contending emotions struggled in her bosom as she descended the old and rugged stone stairs, to which it had conducted her.

Upon entering the gloomy cavern that she supposed would soon lead her to her mother, she paused for a few minutes to regain her resolution.

Every thing was silent: she looked towards an aperture at some distance, through which a glimmering light seemed to issue; she hastily advanced towards it, and entered a large-sized chamber, ~~matted~~ carefully all round.

and well carpeted; a good fire blazed in the chimney, and a lamp burned upon the table.

A couch at the top of the room attracted her attention; she approached it, and beheld, asleep, the figure whose appearance had so fortuitously rescued her from Isenburgh!

Impressed at once with filial love, awe and veneration, she kneeled by the side of the couch, and, in a soft prayer, breathed forth thanksgivings for being so miraculously united to her mother.

Eager to behold her open her eyes, to catch the endearing appel-

lation of daughter from her lips, Estella continued to kneel by the side of her parent.

The interesting moment arrived; the injured sufferer awoke, and, seeing Estella, uttered a plaintive cry: "My child!" — "My mother!" — was all that either could articulate; and, clasped in each others arms, they mingled tears of joy and agony!

It was a considerable time, before either Estella or her mother were sufficiently composed to enter into conversation.

The excess of their joy absorbed every other idea. They frequently

spoke at the same time, yet repeated their interrogatories without waiting for a reply.

At length, Estella gained sufficient recollection to enquire, by what miracle she had been discovered by her mother? who, in return, informed her, that the happy event had been occasioned by Catherine's finding the chain and heart :

“ But it is a long story that I have to unfold, (she added;) you will not be able to listen to me to-night !”

Estella strongly solicited to be made then acquainted with her parents' his-

tory, and to hear by what singular circumstance she had been made a prisoner in her own son's castle?

"Indeed, my child, (answered her mother,) my spirits have been, to-night, so much agitated, that I do not think I could go through what you ask: besides, my Estella, you forget the anxiety I must naturally feel, to hear the cause of your forlorn and neglected state. The little I have been able to gather from Catherine, has inflamed, instead of satisfying, my curiosity!"

Estella complied, as well as her agitation would permit, and related every event of her life that she could

recollect, without omitting a single circumstance.

Her mother displayed the most lively emotions during the recital! In the part that particularly related to Isenburgh, she seemed agitated to agony!

“ Oh, my child! (she cried, when Estella ceased speaking,) how can we sufficiently adore the Divine goodness that has thus wonderfully saved you from the gulph of misery into which you have been so nearly precipitated! May the miraculous interposition prove a beneficial lesson to my poor son! Oh, Estella, to be restored to the world; to enjoy the comforts that have been for fifteen ~~years~~ de-

nied to me, will, not be a blessing, if I find him worthless and dissipated! And, from what you have related concerning him, I tremble!

Ah, when I supposed myself for ever secluded from the world! When I concluded I should never enjoy the rapture of my childrens' society, I *then* thought they were blessings, which, to possess, must, for ever, banish unhappiness! But now, when the moment seems to approach, I feel the fallacy of my ideas: what comfort can visit the parent's heart, whose offspring is depraved and unworthy?

Unfortunate Isenburgh! Deprived in early infancy of both parents, your

faults probably spring from neglect and false indulgence, rather than from nature!"

Estella said every thing to console her mother, and relieve the grief which oppressed her heart; and, after some time, perceiving her more composed, again solicited to hear the singular events that could have caused her confinement, entreating her, not to condescend upon minute particulars, but merely to relate, by whose power and contrivance she had been thus immured; and the story of her death fabricated.

"As concisely as I can, (replied her mother,) I will endeavour to inform you.

FUGITIVE OF

“ Ah, my dearest Estella, when you shall hear your parent's sad history, you will, more than ever, be convinced of the danger of concealment, and the miseries into which our passions may involve us. Be ever diffident of your own judgment; neither goodness of heart, nor even understanding, are equivalent to experience! Passion tends but to lead us into error; and it is rectitude of conduct, that can alone guide us to happiness!”





CHAP. X.

“ Oh, grant us heaven ! that fortitude of mind,
Which listens to our duty, not our passions !

THOMSON.

To her who lov'd me with a faithful mind,
My infant charge I unbaptiz'd consign'd ;
With tears and sighs I gave thee to her care,
Remote from thence, the precious pledge to bear !
What tongue my sorrow, and my plaints can tell,
How oft I press'd thee, with a last farewell !
With streaming tears, each tender kiss is drown'd,
While frequent sighs my flattering words confound.



“ I HAD the misfortune to lose my
father, (said the Lady,) in ~~my earliest~~

infancy ; and, two years after his decease, my mother married Lord Wintersein, a nobleman of considerable fortune and authority ; and also a widower, with one daughter.

“ To the education of Agatha, his child, and myself, my mother paid equal and unremitting attention, till I attained my eleventh year, when my misfortunes first opened in the irreparable loss of that beloved parent.

“ Agatha, whom gratitude and inclination had warmly attached to my dear mother, sincerely sympathized in my sorrow ; and our grief seemed

to defy even the softening hand of time.

“ Almost immediately after her death, Lord Winterfein placed us, to finish our education, in the convent of St. Agnes, where we remained three years; at the expiration of which time, we returned home, in order to celebrate the nuptials of Agatha, (who was three years older than myself,) with the Chevalier Veldentz, to whom she had been affianced from childhood.

“ Alas, what an alteration had three short years made in our domestic residence! Lord Winterfein had married again, and all his af-

fections ~~seemed~~ centered in his new wife.

“ He had never, even in the lifetime of my mother, been affectionate towards me, but he was now perfectly unkind: I was sensible I had no claim upon his regard, and therefore bore his severity in silent sorrow; but the coldness he manifested towards the amiable Agatha, surprised and confounded me!

“ In consequence of the very earnest solicitation of my dear Agatha, I was permitted to attend her to the Chevalier's estate after her marriage, instead of returning to the convent,

as had been Lord Winterfein's intention, and, where I believe he would have been happy to have confined me for ever, had my not being a Protestant been a prevention to my taking the veil; for I was solely dependant upon him.

“ With Agatha, I remained two years; and, during that time, formed an attachment to the only son of Baron Melfort, which was never to be eradicated from my heart.

“ Our regard was mutual, but he dared not solicit me in marriage, being wholly dependant upon his father, who designed him for a rich heiress, to whom he was guardian.

“ In the mean time, I suffered the most poignant ‘ sorrow,’ at witnessing the unhappiness of my friend Madame Veldentz, whose husband, plunged in ‘ gaiety and extravagance, was ruining his fortune, and behaving, towards her, with the most cruel neglect and contempt.

“ About this period, the Baron Melfort died; and my faithful Augustus succeeding to his estate, as soon as decency would permit, threw himself at my feet, and conjured me to unite my fate to his.

“ I referred him to Lord Wintersein, thinking, that as my deceased mother’s husband I owed him the

attention ; and, at the same time, fully confident he would approve a union, that would free him from all further trouble upon my account.

“ Baron Melfort then immediately left me, to hasten to Lord Winterfein, with whom he had no acquaintance ; but, whom he hoped would approve his proposals.

“ After his *départure*, it was a considerable time before we received any intelligence concerning him ; when it did arrive !

“ Oh, heavens ! No succeeding anguish ; has been able to obliterate the dreadful agonies I experienced ! . . .

“ Baron Melfort had, by accident, met Lord Wintersein at a friend's house, some leagues from the estate of the latter.

“ A most violent quarrel had taken place betwixt them, in consequence of a difference of opinion in politics; a challenge was the consequence: they met, and Lord Wintersein was so dangerously wounded, that his life was endangered, and Baron Melfort obliged to fly the country.

“ I received this afflicting news, with a peremptory message, to return, without delay, to my father-in-law!

“ I dared not to disobey the cruel mandate; and, taking a tender leave

of my dear Agatha, (who expressed the utmost reluctance to part with me,) departed, full of affliction, for Wintersein castle.

“ Upon my arrival, I found Lord Wintersein confined by the wounds he had received, and his death daily expected.

“ I was received by Lady Wintersein as the author of these calamities; loaded with reproaches, and closely confined to my chamber!

“ The following day I was ordered to attend Lord Wintersein: with the hopes of softening his resentment, flew to his bed-side.

“ I found him cruel and vindictive; his breast boiling with revenge at his defeat in the duel: execrating his antagonist, and hating me for the attachment I had acknowledged!

“ My sighs and tears seemed rather to exasperate, than to mollify him; and, after exhausting himself in reproaches, he extorted from me a solemn promise, that I would never unite myself to, or even see Baron Melfort.

“ From that day, contrary to the opinions and predictions of his medical attendants, Lord Winterfein rapidly recovered. With returning health, his

hatred towards me seemed to acquire increasing inveteracy, yet he would not suffer me to return to Madame Veldentz, (who, in repeated letters, urged it as a favour,) nay, he, at last, made a pretext, of her having authorised Baron Melfort's addressee, without first consulting him, to quarrel, and break off all intercourse with his daughter.

“ Baron Melfort, hearing that Lord Wintersein had recovered from his wounds, returned from his place of concealment, and, addressing a letter to him, full of the most affecting and genuine sorrow for the effects of his rashness, entreated permission, that his marriage might yet take place.

“ I happened to be in my father-in-law’s company when this letter arrived; but I have not language to describe the fury that possessed him on the perusal.

“ Not contented with rejecting the proposals with the most insulting contempt his rancour was not satisfied, till, by a course of deep-laid schemes, too tedious to be now related, which the power and influence he possessed enabled him to execute, he finally reduced the unfortunate Melfort from the possession of a genteel competency, to a state of actual poverty.

“ I had resided near a twelve-month in Wintersein castle, when it

was my ill fortune to attract the regard of Count Hsenburgh, who directly made proposals to Lord Wintersein, which were, by him, instantly accepted.

“ In vain I made use of prayers and entreaties, that the dreadful marriage might not take place; in vain I supplicated for permission to remain single; my cruel step-father was deaf to all I could utter, and I was commanded to receive the Count as my future husband.

“ Feeling it impossible ever to entertain a proper regard for the Count, and to obliterate the tender recollection of Melfort, I came to the

resolution of confessing my prior attachment, and prevailing upon my destined husband to withdraw his pretensions.

“ But my hopes proved fallacious; the Count replied, “ that I must suppose him very deficient in gallantry to resign me; that the avowal I had just made, convinced him of my virtue; and, that though he might not *then* be so fortunate, as to possess my affections, he doubted not, but constant tenderness, and unremitting attentions on his part, would in a short time, engage them.”

“ Not to dwell too minutely on circumstances, I was, shortly after,

dragged to the altar; and, "as soon as the marriage ceremony was concluded, carried, by the Count, to this, his favourite estate, near Mindenheim.

" With him I lived in splendid misery near three years; the confession of my early attachment having rendered him so distressingly jealous, that he secluded me, almost entirely, from observation and society.

" I could, however, have been perfectly happy in conforming to that mode of living, had I been but *indifferent* to the Count, but, unhappily for my repose, I entertained a strong dislike towards him, which, though it did

not prevent me from fulfilling the duties I had promised at the altar, yet rendered his perpetual society, beyond measure, irksome.

“The restriction from seeing Madame Veldentz, which, (in consequence of my father-in-law’s information, that she had favoured Melfort’s pretensions,) was laid upon me, I considered as a great hardship; and, if I murmured, that was the subject.

“The only happiness I enjoyed, was, in relieving the necessities, and softening the afflictions of the poor.

“Ah, the reflection of those mo-

ments, have softened many succeeding hours of anguish!

“ In administering comfort to the afflicted, how often, for a time, have I even forgot my own griefs!

“ And how frequently have I accused myself of ingratitude at complaining of *my* lot, when I have beheld an unhappy sufferer, struggling with the accumulated miseries of pain of mind, poverty and sickness!

“ The birth of my son opened a pleasing scene to my imagination; I flattered myself, that the delightful occupation of attending him, and im-

planting the seeds of virtue in his infant mind, would absorb my cares, and dissipate the recollection of my disappointments.

“ Within a fortnight after the birth of his son, Count Isenburgh died; leaving me the castle and estate near Mindleheim, upon the condition of my remaining a widow; by a second marriage I was to give up every thing.

“ I had entertained distressing apprehensions, lest the Count should have consigned my child to the guardianship of Lord Wintersein, and enjoyed the most lively satisfaction at

learning, he had deputed that trust to a relation of his own, whose character was unexceptionable.

“ As soon as my health and propriety would permit, I hastened with my little son in search of my dear Madame Veldentz, from whose society and correspondence I had been restricted for four years; but upon arriving at the Chevalier's estate, heard the distressing intelligence, that the imprudent man, after dissipating his fortune, had sold his property, and fled, no one could tell whither; and that my poor friend, abandoned by every one, boarded at the Convent of St. Clare.

“ I will not dwell upon the mutual happiness that Madame Veldentz and I experienced upon meeting after such a long separation.

“ The variety of sorrows that each had endured during that period, brought tears of sympathy to our eyes, whilst the retrospect of our happier days checquered them with smiles of gladness.

“ Agatha readily consented to return with me to Mindleheim, where I hoped we should pass the remainder of our days in tranquillity.

“ I soon perceived that my friend

experienced the most corroding sorrow at the neglect and desertion of her husband, of whom she was passionately fond.

“ She acknowledged to me, that shortly after my marriage, when abandoned by him, she had sought her father’s protection, (which was granted to her, with full assurances of future favour in consequence of her promising never to return to him, even if solicited), that in less than a twelvemonth, upon receiving a letter of affection and contrition from the Chevalier, she had instantly quitted Lord Wintersein, though aware of the resentment, which, by so doing she would excite, and within six months was again forsaken.

“ I used every effort to soothe the affliction of my friend, but it was not till many months had elapsed that she appeared resigned to her lot.

“ My year of mourning was just expired, when we received an unexpected, and I may add, unwelcome visit, from Lord Wintersein.

“ His behaviour was cold and constrained, though it was evident he wished to appear friendly, and to gain my confidence.

“ He could not conceal the mortification he experienced at the guardianship of my son being consigned to

other hands; or, that he imputed it to *my* influence* over the mind of the late Count.

“ I saw him depart with pleasure, and as Madame Veldentz had, in a great measure, recovered her cheerfulness, flattered myself I should experience more ease and comfort than had yet fallen to my lot.

“ But it was not to be; officious friendship! (for such I must call it,) brought to my recollection the unhappy Melfort; reminded me of the solemn vows of everlasting love which we had exchanged; of his ruined fortunes, solely occasioned by his affection for me; and urged, that now

I was free, I ought to fulfil my former engagement !

“ I replied to these arguments, the solemn promise I had given Lord Wintersein, and the obligation under which Count Isenburgh's will had laid me to remain single !

“ Madame Veldentz persevered ; and, though I resisted all her persuasions to see the Baron, I, at length, consented to receive his letters !”

Ah, my dear Estella ! Take warning from my sad story, and always shun the *first* advance to an action which judgment forbids !

Resist the first temptation, and the conquest is easy! But yield, in the smallest instance, and each step will involve you in fresh entanglements.

“ Our correspondence had not continued many months, ere I was astonished at the difficulty with which I had first agreed to it! I was lost to every sentiment but the pleasure it afforded; and, every letter I received, strengthened the attachment it should have been the study of my life to have combated.

“ At length, partly by stratagem, and partly by persuasion, I was in-

duced to see him in the presence of Madame Veldentz ; my promise once infringed, I had not resolution to refuse succeeding interviews ; and, after some months, so completely was my reason subdued by my attachment, I consented to a private marriage, which took place one evening, in the chapel of a neighbouring convent ; and to which Madame Veldentz, the priest, and one other person, were alone witnesses.

“ We took every precaution, both before and after our union, to conceal the Baron’s visits : he came to us under a feigned name, and, in every respect, observed the greatest

circumspection ; yet, though assured of his affection, and feeling my own daily encrease, I was not happy.

“ The self-reproach I endured at having broken a sacred promise, which, though extorted, I yet considered as binding, was perpetual and excessive ; and I accused myself also with the violation to the late Count Isenburgh's will, in keeping possession of the estates, which, by marriage, I had forfeited.

“ But there were two very forcible reasons that obliged me to do so : one, the great necessity there was to conceal the transaction from Lord

Wintersein, whose vindictive temper I dreaded; and the other, the reduced circumstances of Melfort.

“ Our union had not taken place a twelvemonth, when, one night, after having supped at the castle, the dear, unfortunate Melfort, was assassinated in a wood through which he was passing to his lodgings in the adjacent village.

“ I will not attempt to delineate my agonies, on hearing this horrid catastrophe; grief and despair would, undoubtedly, have hurried me to the grave, had not Madame Vel-dentz, finding all reasoning of no

avail, introduced my sweet Frederic, then just four years old, to my bed-side.

“ The sight of the dear child, added to his innocent caresses, brought fresh ideas to my mind; and, with the hope of proving serviceable to him, I once more cherished life.

“ Three weeks had elapsed since the melancholy death of Melfort; and I had not sufficiently recovered, either my health or spirits, to leave my chamber, when, one morning, Madame Veldentz appeared suddenly, and, with a countenance of horror and distress, informed me, Lord Winterfein had arrived.

“ The most melancholy presages instantly clouded my imagination! I felt assured, that my recent marriage was discovered; and that, enraged at my violated promise, Lord Wintersein had come to execute some signal revenge upon me!

“ My unfortunate Melfort's death rushed upon my mind; I shuddered at the horrid reflection, that his assassins had never been discovered, and that the horrid deed had, perhaps, been contrived, by my malignant father-in-law!

“ I sunk upon the couch, nearly exhausted.

“ Oh, Agatha! (I cried,) my punishment is at hand; I feel assured Lord Winterfein has discovered my union with Melfort, and is come to upbraid me! but I cannot see him. Tell him how ill I am; say any thing to keep him from my presence: the sight of him, at this period, would, inevitably, kill me!”

“ Madame Veldentz said every thing to comfort and console me and, by representing to her father that I was extremely ill, with some difficulty, kept him from my apartment.

“ My consternation was excessive, upon learning, that Lord Winterfein

designed to be my guest for a whole month, as, in the course of two or three weeks, I had the prospect of becoming a mother.

“ Madame Veldentz remained in my apartment that night; and we passed the time, till morning, in forming plans, to elude the suspicions of Lord Wintersein, in case (which we had every reason to expect) the awful crisis arrived before his departure.

“ After revolving many different ideas, we finally determined, that, if my child should be born before Lord Wintersein quitted us, that Madame Veldentz should immediately hasten

with it from the castle, attended by one of the two female servants, whom we had been forced to entrust with the secret; at the same time leaving a letter to her father to account for her sudden journey, in which she should pretend to have heard tidings of the Chevalier.

“The evening following the arrangement of the foregoing plan, I was taken ill, and, in the presence of Madame Veldentz, Catherine, and the woman who was to attend in the intended flight, you, my dearest Estella, was born!

“Lord Winterfein, most fortuitously, had gone upon a visit to a neigh-

bouring castle, where he was to remain that night.

“ Before it was day-light, every thing was prepared for the departure of my friend and dear infant: the distressing moment approached, and all the fortitude with which I had endeavoured to steel my breast, forsook me.

“ I clasped you, my child, to my agonized heart, and wept, in the full conviction, that I was bidding you an eternal farewell!

“ As well as grief and weakness would permit, I implored Madame Veldentz to regard, with maternal

tenderneſs, the hapleſs child, born under ſuch melancholy auſpices; and entreated her, never to unfold the hiſtory of her ill-fated parents, till ſhe was arrived at an age to gather a uſeful moral from their miſfortunes.

“ Shocked at the impreſſion I ſeemed to entertain, that I was pronouncing a laſt adieu, Madame Veldentz threw herſelf into my arms, and, bathed in tears, repeatedly promiſed the ſtricteſt attention to my infant; at the ſame time, endeavouring to cheer me with the proſpect of her return, (which ſhould be immediate, upon the departure of Lord Winterſein,) when my health would

be re-established, and she should present you as a child whom chance had introduced to her during her journey, and whom she had adopted as her own.

“ Yet all her attempts to banish my gloomy presages were in vain; I held her hand in mine, and entwined my arms round you, who, unconscious of the pangs that tortured the soul of your suffering mother, smiled innocently in my face; I then threw around you the enamelled heart and chain, and entreated my friend to observe, that you constantly wore it in memory of your unhappy parents, (whose miniatures the heart contained) but not to instruct you in the secret

spring that discovered them, till you should have learned their story.

“ When forming the plan for the removal of Madame Veldentz, we had agreed, that she should take with her one hundred louis; but so powerfully was I impressed with the belief, that I should no more behold her, that, resisting all her arguments to the contrary, I insisted upon her taking the casket that contained my jewels, and the remainder of the money I had by me, which amounted to a very considerable sum.

“ Paulina, (the attendant who was to accompany her,) at length tapped at the door, and informed Madame Veldentz, that the chaise was in waiting, and re-

minded her of the risk that delay might occasion.

“ Suffocated with tears, I could scarcely articulate my adieus, or repeat the prayers and blessings my heart dictated. My friend, nearly as much overpowered as myself, yet sensible of the necessity of quickly leaving me, tore herself from my arms, and forcing you also from my embraces, hurried from the apartment, whilst faint, weak, and exhausted, I sunk back on the bed, nearly insensible.

“ Lord Winterheim returned in two days. I understood from Catherine, that he expressed the highest displeasure at reading his daughter's letter ;

and much surprised that any consideration should have induced her to abandon me in an illness that he understood to be so serious !

“ Each day encreased the difficulty of avoiding an interview with Lord Winterfein, who continued an inmate in my castle, without specifying any time for departing.

“ My attendant, Catherine, added to my various distresses by the gloomy and morose manners she had displayed from the time Madame Veldentz had left me. Possessed of a secret, the concealment of which was so highly important, I dared not to rebuke her ; and thus constrained to submit to her

fullen infolence, endured another, of the painful effects of clandestine actions!

“ Four weeks had elapsed since your birth, when, one night, after having rang the bell for Catherine to assist me in undressing, and surprised at her not obeying the summons, I remained reclined upon the sofa, the door of my chamber slowly opened, and Lord Wintersein appeared!

“ Impressed with terror I could not conceal, I vainly endeavoured to articulate a common salutation.

“ Indeed, had he not been the object of my detestation, had I not

secretly nourished the horrid idea that he was the contriver of my dear Melfort's death, the singular time he had chosen for visiting me, and his gloomy and disturbed air, would have been sufficient to excite my apprehensions.

“ Seating himself on the sofa, after a silence of some minutes, which I had not the courage to break, he thus addressed me :

“ It is of no consequence to mention by what means I have become acquainted with your unjustifiable conduct ; it is sufficient to you, that the clandestine visits of Baron Melfort have reached my knowledge, with the shameful effects which they pro-

duced. Call to recollection the solemn promise you gave, 'never to behold that object of my deserved detestation; and then ask your heart, if I have not reason to hate and despise you? Once incensed, I am ever implacable; yet the punishment I have destined you is mild, in comparison to the enormity of your fault!"

"At these words, and still more at the furious looks of Lord Wintersein, my heart sunk with terror; I rose from the sofa, and endeavoured to reach the bell; he prevented me, and forcing me back to my seat, declared, "that all resistance, on my part, would be in vain; that Catherine was

entirely in his interests, and the confidant of his plans; that *my illness*, and the absence of his daughter, having given him authority in the castle, he had availed himself of it to discharge the greatest part of my servants that morning, pretending himself dissatisfied with their want of attention; and, that those that remained, would be no impediment to his views."

"He then proceeded to say, that some subterraneous rooms near the chapel, (of which Catherine had informed him,) were prepared for my reception; that my death should be announced to the world; and that,

in solitude and imprisonment I should end my days; and, he hoped, expiate my faults by penitence."

" I cannot paint my sensations at hearing this horrid doom, to which, my knowledge of Lord Winterfein's character left me little doubt but that he would adhere.

" I sunk upon my knees, and pleaded for pity and forgiveness. His rancour even seemed to derive new force with my supplications.

" He reproached me bitterly with my breach of promise, and vented the strongest execrations against Madame Veldentz, for having secreted you

from his vengeance, and reviled his own conduct in having been absent from the castle; and, by so acting, allowed her the opportunity.

“ He spoke of the unfortunate Melfort in the most opprobrious terms; nay, from what escaped him in his rage, I am convinced he had given the orders for his assassination!

“ At length, in an authoritative voice, he commanded me to rise and follow him; at the same time going to the door, he summoned Catherine, who instantly appeared.

“ Upon seeing her I renewed my prayers and entreaties.

“ Oh, Catherine! (I cried) you will not surely join in persecuting me!”

“ She surveyed me attentively, but without replying.

“ Many persons (exclaimed Lord Wintersein) irritated and incensed as I am, would adopt much more rigorous measures; would perhaps punish your criminality with death! Do not, therefore, heighten my just displeasure with vain resistance.

“ Catherine shall attend you with food and necessaries every night; your rooms are well aired, and I have waited till your health and strength were a little restored, that

you might not imagine I sought your death!"

"Do you call it kindness to endeavour to prolong a life you design to render for ever miserable! (I replied). Must I be torn from my dear children, and my friend, and banished from the glorious light of the heavens! Oh! no, no, you are not so merciless, you cannot design such cruelty! I am guilty I acknowledge; but my breach of promise, has all along been its own punishment; my own conscience has never ceased to upbraid me! Immure me in a Convent, inflict upon me the severest penances, only sometimes indulge me with a sight of my

Frederic, and of the dear babe who has as yet scarce felt the pressure of maternal tenderness, and I will bless your clemency with my latest breath."

"I repeat all resistance is vain! (answered Lord Winterfein), and your intreaties useless; rise, and we will conduct you to your prison."

"Oh, hear me, hear me, (cried I, still kneeling), as you shall hereafter hope for mercy, do not tear me from my children! Oh, my Frederic! why art thou not here! your innocent pleadings for your wretched mother, would soften the most obdurate heart!"

"As you desire your son to be affectionately treated, cease these superfluous exclamations, (returned Lord Wintersein), and follow me this instant."

"At these words I paused, I dreaded the power Lord Wintersein might usurp over my child, when the recollection that he was placed under the guardianship of a man of excellent character, consoled me; yet fearful of exasperating my cruel persecutor, lest the consequences should be fatal to my child, I resolved no longer to resist."

"I resign myself to my cruel destiny, (I exclaimed); all I suppli-

cate for, is to behold my Frederic once more; conduct me to his bedside, let me bestow upon him, one last look and blessing, and I will accompany you to my prison without another murmur."

" You ask an impossibility ! (returned Lord Winterfein). It cannot be."

" Oh, say not so, (I replied in agony); but for five minutes, let me behold my son !"

" In supplicating to behold my son, I lost every other reflection; I clasped the knees of my oppressor, I wept, I conjured him in the most abject terms to grant me the indul-

gence; he was deaf to all my pleadings, and perceiving him make a sign to Catherine, to assist him in disengaging himself from my hold, I made a violent effort, and springing to the door, ran through the gallery to my child's apartment.

“ I rushed wildly to his bed; he was in a sweet sleep, the woman who slept in his chamber, in another bed, was also asleep; I kneeled by his side, and in a fervent prayer implored heaven to bless and protect him!

“ Catherine pursued me.

“ My poor lady is delirious! (she ex-

claimed aloud). Rise instantly, Johanna and seek for assistance."

" Oh, Johanna ! (I cried), believe me, I am not delirious ; alas, I am but too keenly sensible of my woes help me Johanna, they would tear me from my child !"

" The wildness of my manner impressing the woman with the conviction, that I was actually delirious, she hastily, wrapped herself in a bed gown, and quitted the room.

" Catherine seizing me, in her arms, forcibly endeavoured to remove me from my Frederic's bed. Unable to contain myself, I uttered a plain

tive cry; my child awoke, and seeing me, extended his little arms, I sunk upon the bed, and embraced him with fervor; Catherine, in vain, essayed to remove me.

“ Oh! merciful God! (I exclaimed), bless this beloved infant! protect him from the power of my barbarous persecutor! I will endure patiently every grief and hardship with which I am threatened; if I may dare hope that my penitence and resignation may expiate my own faults, and draw down blessings upon the dear offspring from whom I am thus cruelly conveyed!”

“ The agitation of my spirits was

claimed aloud). Rise instantly, Johanna, and seek for assistance."

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“ The agitation of my spirits was

too much for my exhausted frame to support; I fainted, nor recovered my recollection, till after I had been some time in this dreary chamber, where I found myself, upon opening my eyes, placed on the bed, and Catherine administering different means for my recovery.

“ She staid with me that whole night, and from her I learned that upon my fainting, she had, with the assistance of Lord Wintersein, carried me back to my chamber before the return of Johanna; who, upon entering my room with another female servant, (whom she summoned to my supposed assistance) was informed, by Catherine, that I had grown tolerably composed,

and had thrown myself upon the bed, she fancied with the intention of going to sleep.

“ Johanna and the other woman retired, and Lord Wintersein, immediately coming from a closet, in which he had concealed himself till their departure, assisted by Catherine, removed me in the state of insensibility into which I had fallen, to these dismal rooms which I have from that period inhabited.

“ After seeing me immured in this sad prison, with a strict charge to Catherine to give me every possible aid, and to remain with me that whole night, Lord Wintersein depart-

ed, and I rejoice that from that period I have never beheld him.

“ After describing to me where she had placed the food and other necessaries I might require, Catherine strongly urged me to endeavour to sleep; you will easily believe that was, in my agitated state, for some time impossible!

“ At length, wearied and exhausted, I sunk into a sort of slumber; how long it continued I know not, but when I awoke, I felt feverish and thirsty, I called repeatedly on Catherine, but received no answer; I sprang from the bed, the lamp burned brightly on the table, and the fire

remained in the chimney, but I perceived my jailor had escaped whilst I was asleep, apprehensive, perhaps, that I might have made some efforts to have followed her, had I known the time of her departure.

“ I seized the lamp and traversed the different rooms in my prison; I found them all tolerably furnished, and well carpeted and matted.

“ From their appearance, I judged them to have been in that state some time; and concluded them to have been designed as places of safety and concealment at the time when our country was much disturbed with civil commotions.

“ It rather astonished me, that I should never have heard of these subterraneous rooms; but my ignorance of them convinced me, that, in all probability, Catherine was the only one in the family acquainted with their existence.

“ After surveying my melancholy abode, I returned to my fire side, which I supplied plentifully with the wood which Catherine had left me, and trimmed my lamp, having much apprehension that either should extinguish and leave me in total darkness.

“ I had no watch, and the time crept so slowly that I began to think

the promise Catherine had given me to return was a fabrication to amuse me, and that it was Lord Winterfein's intention I should perish for want.

“ Catherine at length appeared; from her I learned that my supposed death was believed throughout the castle and village; that the great precautions of Lord Winterfein, rendered detection impossible, and that my sweet Frederic was to remove the following morning to the house of his guardian, Baron Weinhauffen.

“ I rejoiced in my own mind that my dear child would so entirely be taken from the power of Lord Winterfein; and made many enquiries

concerning him, to which 'I had the rapture to hear he was well in health, though I was the following instant nearly suffocated with tears, when Catherine added,

“ To be sure, poor dear, he grieves incessantly after you; he discovers an infinite share of sensibility at his early age !”

“ The recollection of my son so completely overpowered me, that I heard not another syllable that was uttered by Catherine; I felt the barbarity of my cruel step-father perhaps more keenly at that moment than at any period previous or subsequent.

“ Catherine perceiving me thus absorbed in grief, retired.

“ She had no sooner quitted me, than I sunk upon my knees and prayed for resignation and composure! After some time I felt much calmer, and I again prayed for the preservation of my dear children and Madame Veldentz.

“ Ah! what an inestimable blessing have I found religion during my long captivity! but for the consoling balm it afforded my sorrows, I must inevitably have sunk under their pressure! But I resigned myself to that sublime passion; it inspired me with confidence and tranquillity; and I dared

to hope my fervent prayers for the happiness of my children would be heard at the Throne of Mercy!

“ I supplicated to behold my children again, and many of the lingering hours of my captivity have been softened with the consolatory idea, that heaven would grant me that inestimable blessing!

“ Catherine brought me food and other necessaries very regularly : I ever interrogated her concerning my son, and her answers were always satisfactory during his childhood.

“ But to my enquiries concerning Madame Veldentz and you, my

poor Estella, she always protested entire ignorance!

“ About three years ago, a very visible alteration took place in the conduct of Catherine; her health was declining, and to that circumstance I imputed her change of manners.

“ Instead of bringing my food and retiring in a few minutes, (as had been her custom), she would sit with me for some hours, and frequently endeavour to account for her concurrence in Lord Wintersein's cruel proceedings; by expatiating on the very great temptation that money was to a woman in her condition.

“ She appeared anxious to extenuate her conduct, by affording me every comfort my situation would permit; she brought me books, materials for writing and for work, in short every article I seemed to desire; and, what was more gratifying than all, would recount anecdotes of my son, which occasionally came to her knowledge.

“ For my own part, I had for a long time ceased to regard her with enmity or displeasure; I considered her as a woman dazzled by the brilliant offers of an artful man, and once inveigled in his snares, too deeply entangled to extricate herself, even if such was her desire; the remorse

that appeared to consume her excited my commiseration, while the concern I could not forbear testifying at her repeated complaints of indisposition, yet seemed to encrease it.

“ About four months ago, I understood my son was arrived at this castle, which he had never visited from the time he was four years old.

“ Ah, how ardently I longed to behold him! Those who have not experienced the feelings of a mother, can scarcely conceive the sensations that pervaded my heart!

“ I also learned, that he was ac-

accompanied by a young lady, whom it was supposed he was going to marry!

“ Oh, Estella! I can never recollect what might have happened, without blessing the providential intervention that prevented that dreadful event!

“ The evening after your flight, Catherine repaired to me; her looks alarmed me: she was pale, confused, and breathless.

“ I eagerly enquired the cause; she first informed me, that the whole castle had been thrown into confusion by the elopement of its intended mis-

treasures; then drawing the heart and chain from her pocket, presented it to me, and enquired, if I recollected it?

“ The sight of the memorial, which I had, at parting, bestowed upon my child, agitated me, beyond the power of expression.

“ At length, I eagerly enquired, by what means it had fallen into her hands?

“ It is, then, the heart and chain you threw over the baby that dreadful night when Madame Veldentz departed,” (cried Catherine fearfully.)

“ Ah, yes ; (I replied, at the same time touching^o the spring, and discovering the miniatures.) Have you forgot those features ?” -

“ Then let us rejoice, Madam, (Catherine continued,) that the young lady has escaped the Count's power, for, as sure as I exist, she is your daughter ?

“ Gracious heavens ! (I exclaimed,) What is it you say ? My daughter ? It cannot, it must not be ! How can you be sure that this belonged to the lady who has been residing here ?

“ I picked it up this morning, at

the bottom of the flight of steps that leads from the hall to the Park, (answered Catherine;) and what convinces me that it dropped from the neck of the young lady who escaped this morning, is, that yesterday, I saw her, from a distance, walking in the gardens, with Ulrique and Gertrude: she had no cloak, and I was struck with the appearance of the heart and chain, which reminded me of that I had so often seen in your possession, though I was not sufficiently near her to distinguish that it was the identical same."

"It is really impossible to describe my agonies at this assurance! The idea, that my son was in love

with his own sister, petrified me with horror! and, from that hour, till this night, my wretchedness is not to be conceived!

“ I heard not of your being forced back to the castle till this morning, when Catherine announced it, adding the distressing information, that your marriage was destined to take place this night!

“ At this intelligence, I grew nearly frantic with horror, and conjured Catherine, by a full avowal of your birth, to avert the horrid union, and, at the same time, extenuate her share in the iniquitous proceedings of Lord Winterfein.

" Her terrors of that inhuman man, (who still lives,) were such, that though I am convinced a real penitent, and participating in my distracting fears, lest you should form a marriage with your brother, it was a considerable time before I could induce her to calm my fears, by promising compliance.

" At length I succeeded; and, as an assurance of her sincerity, she taught me the spring of the sliding pannel, though I could not prevail upon her to give up the key of the grated door.

" Yet the gaining the secret of the pannel was, to me, highly satisfactory;

I determined to remain near to it that whole evening, to listen attentively, and, if I should find by footsteps passing to the chapel, that she had failed in her promises, by appearing at the grate, and announcing your relationship, to avert the horrid nuptials.

“ In consequence of the thickness of the walls, (which I had not considered,) though close to the pannel, and endeavouring to catch every sound, I heard nothing till your piercing shriek penetrated my soul, and filled me with distraction; I removed the pannel, and you know what followed.

“ But my emotions were so vio-

lent, that scarce knowing what I did, I, as instantly closed it, and the next minute repenting that I had done so, again sought the spring, but my lamp dropped from my hand, and, in seeking to recover it, I fell some steps.

“ It was not till some time after I had re-kindled my light, that I could summon courage to again ascend the stairs and seek the pannel; and, when I did, every thing was quiet, and the room deserted.

“ I returned to this chamber, consoled with the idea, that my appearance had wrought the effect I desired; yet, full of anxiety to behold

Catherine again, to learn farther information.

“ And now, my dear Estella, I have, as succinctly as the perturbation of my spirits have allowed, related the detail of my sufferings and misfortunes.

“ May the narrative impress on your mind the necessity of subduing the *first* incitement to error; and convince you, that passion is a phantom which dazzles and misleads, but is too frequently succeeded by remorse and vexation.

“ While a virtuous sacrifice ulti-

mately brings its reward in the sweet remembrance of its propriety!


“ Above all, that piety can soothe the greatest calamities humanity may be called on to endure; and that the trials which would resist every argument of philosophy, may be supported by the sublime power of religion.”





CHAP. XI.

Oh, thou maternal softness! hear thy son;
Thus kneeling, bathing with his tears thy feet,
Swear to cast off each fond alluring thought,
The world, its honours, pleasures, and ambition;
To thee alone devoted!



THE feelings of Menburgh, upon quitting the apartment where he fancied he had beheld the shade of his deceased mother, were various and agonizing.

He retired to his chamber, and passed the night in a state of anxiety bordering upon distraction.

His mind was a chaos of doubt and apprehension; and, though weakened with the loss of blood, the wound in his forehead had occasioned, he quitted his apartment with the first dawn of morning, and repairing to the saloon, dispatched a message to Estella, soliciting she would allow him half an hour's conversation.

The information that followed his request, that she was no where to be found, created the most distressing images in his mind; and summoning the women he had placed as her at-

tendants, he soon learned, in reply to his interrogatories, that she had visited the chamber of Catherine at a late hour the foregoing night, (in consequence of the poor woman's earnest entreaty), and, much to their surprise, had not returned to her own room since that hour.

Ifenburgh instantly hurried to the dying penitent; who, terrified at his vehemence, and dreading the consequences of his rage when he should hear that she had been an auxiliary in the imprisonment of his mother, was, for a considerable time, unable to reply to his enquiries, or relate any of the particulars she had before divulged to Estella.

No language can paint the sensations of Ifenburgh, when encouraged by his assurances of pardon; she *did* confess the leading circumstances of the iniquitous treatment his hapless parent had experienced! he waited not for particulars, but quickly hastening to the spot she directed, sought the dreary abode of his unfortunate mother

Though but four years old, at the time, when her supposed death was published, he retained a fond recollection of her memory and grateful remembrance of her tenderness.

His heart dissolved in commiseration of her sufferings, and he panted

to enfold her in his arms, and evince the duty, respect, and affection that agitated his heart.

Estella, in her eagerness the preceeding night, had forgotten to close the pannel or the grated door it concealed; Isenburgh hastily descended the stairs; Estella and her mother were too deeply engaged in discourse to hear his footsteps; he entered the chamber and threw himself at the feet of his parent!

Their mutual feelings may be conceived but cannot be described; in the same minute he accused and blessed Providence! and uttered incoherent expressions of both joy and

grief! while the Baroness, enfolding him to her heart, in a delirium of joy, appeared to forget every sorrow she had sustained in the extatic transport that thrilled throughout her heart!

Estella, who had, on the first glimpse of Henburgh, involuntarily screened herself from his observation; beheld the affecting interview with delight amounting to rapture!

Her emotions betrayed her presence, and Henburgh perceiving her, discovered every symptom of embarrassment and confusion.

“As a brother,” (he cried), “may .

I solicit your pardon for conduct, which ignorance——”

He paused, unable to proceed; the Baroness took Estella's hand, and putting it within his, exclaimed,

“Let us not, my dear children, fully our present felicity, by painful retrospections; Estella will, I am sure, forget every thing but the services you may have rendered her, and——”

“As your daughter, (nearly interrupted Henbury) and the wife of my friend, I will ever respect her; my future conduct shall evince the sincerity of my assertions.”

"Alas! I have much to expiate, but it shall be my study to endeavour to atone for all offences, and to hush the remembrance of your affections my dear mother, by the most unremitting tenderness and assiduity.

"Let us now quit this horrid spot, where innocence has so long groaned without redress; return to the castle of which you are sole mistress; and by your future counsel, guide and direct your son, whose pride and happiness will consist in his affection and obedience."



CHAP. XII.

Friendship shall still thy evening feasts adorn,
 And blooming peace shall ever bless thy morn,
 Succeeding years their happy race shall run,
 And age, unbecked by delight, come on.

UPON returning to his own society, the mother of Effie immediately announced her marriage with the deceased Baron Melford, and consequently her obligation to withdraw every claim upon the estate of Isenburgh.

But the generosity of her son would not hear of the latter conclusion ; he contended,

“ That though she might forfeit the castle and estate in conformity to the will of his father, that she could not in justice refuse to accept it as a small testimony of his filial love ”

In short, his arguments were too numerous and sincere to be rejected ; and the Baroness was shortly legally restored to her former wealth and possessions.

After writing a circumstantial detail to Sigismund of the singular

train of events that had happened, and entreating him to hasten to Mindleheim, Isenburgh declared his intentions of seeking the infamous Lord Winterfein, to punish him according to his deserts.

The Baroness, apprehensive of the danger that might accrue to her son, warmly combated his intention, yet Isenburgh was obstinate; when, on the day previous to his intended journey, information arrived, that, having learned his unjustifiable confinement of the Baroness was discovered, and dreading the vengeance that would in consequence pursue him, he had secretly fled, and embarked for ~~the~~ but a violent storm arising two days

after the vessel had been at sea, she was wrecked; yet the crew and passengers saved, with the exception of the detestable Lord.

Every succeeding day seemed to confirm the good dispositions which Menburgh had displayed from the moment his mother was restored, and his affinity to Estella discovered.

His former errors had proceeded from a defective education, and never from depravity.

His heart was naturally good; and reason having at length obtained a proper dominion, his every wish was, to extenuate his faults, and promote

the happiness of his mother and sister.

He avowed, in confidence, to the Baroness, his intention, of bestowing upon Estella a sufficient dowry, to render her, in all respects, an equal match to Sigismund, and, by that means, remove every objection that his narrow-minded father might oppose to their union; at the same time entreating, that, till every thing was settled, his sister might remain in ignorance of his intentions.

She, however, learned, through his information to the Baroness, that the Marchioness Rosenheim, with whom she had been so infinitely charmed

whilst an inmate in Stralzi castle, was the mother of her beloved Sigismund.

Baron Mansfeldt having been honoured with the dignity of Marquis Rosenhaim, and the title of Lord Meldorp bestowed upon his son, very shortly after the latter's departure from Leipzig.

The arrival of Lord Meldorp, at Mindleheim, who hurried there upon the receipt of Ikenburgh's packet, banished every uneasy sensation from the heart of Estelle; every thing was explained to their mutual satisfaction; and, in renewing their vows of un-

alterable love, the recollection of past afflictions, served but to heighten the extatic transport of their present felicity.

Baroness Melfort, though charmed with her son-in-law, and delighted with the contemplation of his happiness with Estella, and the cordiality that subsisted between him and Isenburgh, yet, at the expiration of a month, forbore to oppose his wishes of carrying her daughter to Rosenhaim, though she, at parting, exacted a promise, (which was readily granted,) that they would not suffer a length of time to elapse without visiting Mindeheim.

Estella's reception at Rosenhaim was, in every respect, gratifying to her feelings; the Marchioness overwhelmed her with tenderness; and, from every individual in the family, she received the most flattering testimonies of regard.

The family of Stralzi hastened to Rosenhaim, to congratulate and compliment both her and Lord Meldorp upon their union.

Palamede seized the earliest opportunity of unfolding the part of his conduct that required explanation.

As the confidential friend of Sigismund, he had been entrusted with

the event of his marriage, and every circumstance relative to his acquaintance with Estella, from its first commencement, to her supposed acceptance of Isenburgh's protection.

Thus prejudiced against her, he, for some weeks after her introduction to Stralzi castle, considered her as a designing girl, abandoned by the man for whose sake she had renounced her vows and engagements to his cousin; and, by an artful fabrication, imposed upon the credulity and good-nature of his mother.

What strengthened these suspicions in his mind, was, the conviction, that, though she had pretended to

detail the incidents of her life confidentially to Baroness Stralzi, she had studiously avoided to mention every circumstance that concerned Sigismund.

The innocence of Estella's manners, however, gradually removed these injurious ideas; he began to believe *her* story, to think it probable his cousin might have been imposed upon by the artificers of Menburgh; and, he resolved, on the night of the masquerade, under the character of the *magician*, to arouse her curiosity by glancing at events which she had concealed in her narrative, and induce her to place confidence in him, when he should avow himself.

Sigismund, who, in consequence of the information he had received from Isenburgh's valet, had been pursuing the fugitives to —, returned from his fruitless journey the morning following the masquerade.

He found the whole family in distress and consternation at the *enlèvement* of Estella; and from Palamede learned, the Lady they lamented, was the object of his tender affection, whom he had then every reason to suppose innocent and faithful.

Love and revenge equally incited him to again endeavour to overtake their flight. Palamede accompanied him; but, owing to the arduous pre-

cautions of Isenburgh, instead of seeking Mindleheim, they were misled to take the road towards Leipzig.

Isenburgh's packet arrived during their absence; but the messenger had received the strictest injunctions to give it into Lord Meldorp's own hand, followed him with so much expedition, as to deliver it in two days after he had left Stralzi castle.

Upon perusing the contents, Sigismund, amazed and overjoyed, hurried towards Mindleheim, whilst Palamede returned to his family, to divulge the particulars, and every circumstance relating to the attachment and union of Sigismund and Estella.

Madame Veldentz, again abandoned by her husband, (whose persuasions had caused her to neglect her charge, and follow his fortunes,) at the expiration of some months, sought Estella at the convent of St. Clare.

Grief and distress upon hearing she had never been received there, rendered her nearly frantic! She upbraided herself as the origin of every misfortune that might have befallen her adopted child; and the most poignant remorse seized her mind, that she should have been seduced to abandon her!

By the direction of the Abbess, she

repaired to Mindleheim, and the opposite sensations of joy and wonder she there experienced, nearly overpowered her shattered constitution.

She blessed heaven for the miraculous preservation of Baroneſs Melfort; accuſed herſelf as the firſt cauſe of her miſfortunes; ſhed tears of compunction at having quitted Eſtella; and then rejoiced, in the moſt affecting manner, at the perils that beloved object had eſcaped, and the happy deſtiny that had befallen her.

Baroneſs Melfort, by the moſt affiduous tenderneſs, endeavoured to reconcile her friend to the conduct ſhe deprecated; and, by perpetually dwel-

ling upon the happy consequences it had in the end produced, gradually vanquished her chagrin and vexation.

Many weeks had not passed since her residence at Mindenheim, when she received the intelligence of the Chevalier Veldentz's death, who, having entered the army after last quitting his wife, had fallen in a recent engagement.

Notwithstanding the many instances of neglect and unkindness she had experienced from him, Madame Veldentz could not hear of the end of a husband she had ever loved with unsubdued, and even romantic attach-

ment, without yielding to the deepest affliction.

The attentions of Baroness Melfort, at length dissipated her sorrow; and gratitude and affection towards that valued friend were ever the predominant emotions of her breast.

Whatever propensity to vice Isenburgh might have displayed on first emerging into the world, his own reflections on the miseries which the impetuosity of his passions had nearly produced, and the virtuous precepts, and conversation of his mother, effectually vanquished.

To promote her happiness was

ever the primary wish of his soul; and, in constituting her felicity, he effectually established his own.

Transported with his dutiful attentions; with the traits of goodness of which he daily gave fresh instances; and equally delighted with the affectionate conduct of Estella and Sigismund, Baroness Melfort seemed to forget her former miseries in her present state of bliss!

Yet her misfortunes could never be effaced from her mind, though the recollection, far from being painful, rendered her more exquisitely sensible of the numerous blessings she then possessed; and swelled her heart

With rapturous gratitude to the Power
who had supported her throughout her
sufferings!

Catherine survived her confession
some years; and, at her earnest en-
treaty, retired to a neighbouring mo-
nastery, where, in unfeigned penitence,
she terminated her life.

The mutual attachment of Estella
and Sigismund, increased with the
continuance of their union.

Heaven blessed them with chil-
dren, in whom they found the com-
pletion of earthly happiness; and, in
fulfilling the delightful and extensive
duties of nature and affection, their

hours glided in uninterrupted harmony, while their virtues and benevolence diffused to all around them gladness and content.

